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"My precious mother." Page 62.
Frontispiece.

ONE QUIET LIFE.

BY
MRS. J. J. COLTER,
AUTHOR OF "ROBIE MEREDITH."



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Frontispiece.

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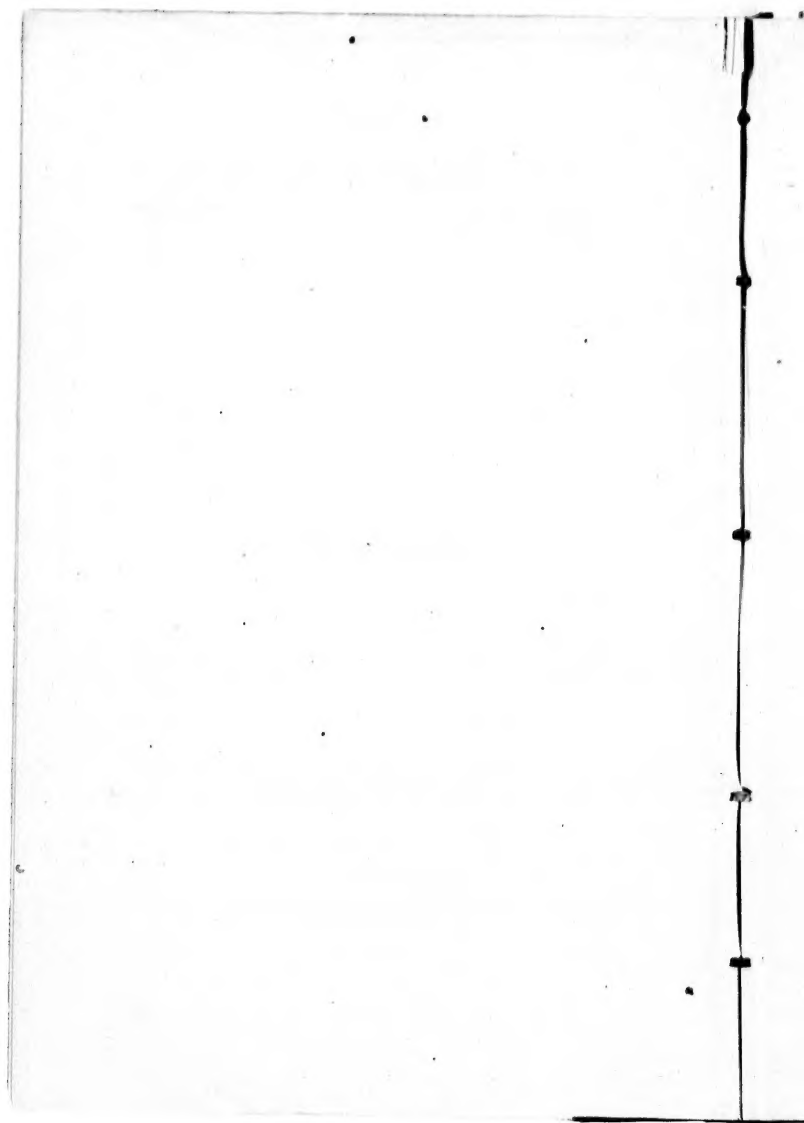
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ONE QUIET LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD.

 I CAN just dimly recollect the country village we lived in before my father removed to N. I know the cottage used as a parsonage was a pleasant one. It was situated on the slope of a hill, surrounded by a strip of meadow, where I used to pick the yellow buttercups and dandelions, and hunt low down in the grass for the little purple flowers of which no one seemed to know the name; I loved their modest faces so well I could think of nothing

pretty enough to call them, unless it was "Meta," after my own violet-eyed mother. I had no playfellow except Marco, a great, shaggy, brown dog with eyes that reminded me of the deep well in the orchard; perhaps it was because he always looked so beseechingly at me when I went near it to play.

I can remember attending the church where my father used to preach, but once; then, though I watched eagerly, I could only now and then catch a glimpse of his curls above the top of the high pulpit. The singing sounded so strangely to me; the choir still clung to those old-fashioned tunes, in which the different parts chase each other with the utmost strength of voice and speed. I was accustomed at home to hear my mother's sweet, yet rich voice in our pleasant twilight hours, which father always devoted to us, singing those beautiful airs that seemed a part of her being; but this church music was so different; I clung to mother's dress in silent misery until, in what was I suppose the most

impassioned part, I slipped down beside her, burying my face in her lap to hush the wail that sounded through it all. The graveyard, with its icy children nestling under the grass, came up before me together with the dreary picture that often haunted me of father and mother lying in their coffins, gone far away from their child. I cried myself quiet in her lap, the voices of the singers drowning my sobs. I never wished to go to that church again and my parents in that respect humored my fancies.

After we removed to N. the long holiday I had enjoyed ever since I could remember came to an end. Father thought it was high time for my school-day life to begin. I would have greatly preferred the public school with the companionship of children of my own age to the long silent mornings in father's little study, while the sun was cheerily shining outside and Marco eagerly watching on the door-step, waiting for a race with me down to the brook, which rippled alone through the meadow, and by the

edge of the thicket where we used to paddle in the water, or hunt fruitlessly for bird's nests under the trees.

At first, instead of such fun, I used to find it hard to puzzle over difficult words in the reading lesson and tiresome sums that would scarcely ever come right, but by degrees I came to like the stillness of the quiet study, with the steady scratching of father's pen, or the monotonous beat of his footsteps as he paced to and fro in deep thought. I grew to like even better the gradual inception of knowledge. Father had such a way of interesting me in the lessons; he tried to make me think for myself, while he taught from his own wide stores of knowledge rather than the text book that often lay unused on our study table.

When I was scarcely nine he thought me sufficiently advanced to commence Latin and French. I was his only child, and all the ambition centered in me which he had cherished about the boy who never came to gladden his

heart. I can recall, even now, the long conversations he and mother used to have about my future; every retrenchment was to be made in the little household that money might be saved to give me a thorough education; while the utmost care was taken of my health; coarse food was unspairingly given but it was only when enjoying a holiday with some little friend in the town that a delicate morsel of cake or pie found its way to my unaccustomed lips.

With father accompanying me, I took daily walks across hill and moor, our tramp frequently extended over many weary miles; when he was ill, which soon came to be pretty frequently, I was obliged to go alone with only Marco for attendant. This hardy training was the best for me, I grew stronger every day, notwithstanding the severe study father urged upon my only too willing brain. Afterward I came to have other playfellows beside Marco.

As I passed to and fro in my walks I noticed one day, an unusual stir going on about the little

cottage at the foot of our lane ; it had stood unoccupied ever since we came to N. much to my regret, none of our immediate neighbors had children and my only hope of getting human play-fellows lay in the future occupants of this cottage. As I stood, this day, eagerly watching the proceedings and longing to discover some signs of children, a large good-natured-looking woman who had been bustling about, as I thought, in every one's way, soon spied my anxious little face, peeping through the fence, and coming quickly to my side she said, cheerily :

"Well, my little girl, and what might your name be?"

"Dorothy Thurston," I timidly answered.

"Thurston, why are you the ministers child?"

"Yes, he is my father." I waited for no further questioning and with a beating heart, asked earnestly : "Have you any children, Ma'am?"

"Children? why bless your heart dearie I have nothing much but children."

"Oh, I am so glad! May I come and play with them sometime?"

"Why, yes, of course, you can all the time if you like, but have you none at home?"

"No, I am the only one and its so lonesome."

"So it must be, poor child. I think its a crying shame for folks to bring one desolate little chick into the world and keep it all alone; but never mind my Axy and Ahsy shall play with you."


What funny names I thought, and Ashy was instantly presented to my mind as a very girm specimen of humanity, whether male or female I could not tell. I had no further time however just then to reflect on the nomenclature of Mrs. Dutton's children, as it was time for lessons, so I said good-morning and went hastily up the hill to our door.





CHAPTER II.

PLAYFELLOWS.

 "YOU may go and play an hour with Mrs. Dutton's children."

What welcome words these were as mother addressed them to me, at the close of study hours, the day after I met our new neighbor at the fence. All that day delightful plans had been mingling in my head, with the Latin and French verbs I had to conjugate, and father reproved me more sharply for my inattention than he had ever done before for months. I had so many wonders in field and forest to exhibit, such stores of treasures Marco and I had discovered but which he

could not help me to admire. I longed too for childish sympathy in my griefs as well as pleasures.

My thoughts were busy the last thing at night and the first thing in the morning laying plans for the amusement of my new playmates and when the coveted moment came, when I found myself walking slowly down the lane to their home, I could scarcely realize the measure of my satisfaction.

When I came in sight of the house what a spectacle awaited my delighted gaze ; a swarm of children were gathered under an old apple tree, that had often given me a gloomy sensation but which was henceforth to be remembered with delight for the friendliness that now awaited me beneath its shade.

There were seven children. Could I believe my own arithmetic as I stood still and counted them ?

Yes it was true and forgetting my usual shyness, in my anxiety to discover Ashy and Axy I stepped quickly forward.



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The largest child, a pale, gentle looking boy about twelve years old, was holding a great rollicking baby, which seemed determined to develop its muscles and vocal powers to their utmost capacity.

When the children saw me, which did not happen until I stood just beside them, they looked up pleasantly, and one of the little ones cried out, joyously :

“ Here she comes ! ”

I instantly felt at home, and in a few minutes was sitting on the grass with Alexandrina in my arms. It was impossible for me to disencumber myself of such a load of infantile humanity, until Ashy, whom I discovered to be a boy, and the eldest of the family, took her again.

My first task was to learn the names of my new associates, a task, not easily learned ; for their father being of an aspiring turn of mind, but not gifted with very discriminating taste, had selected the longest he could find in the few books that comprised his scant library.

Ashy, I found to be an abbreviation of Ahasuerus, and Axy, of Artaxerxes.

Their mother, less ambitious than her husband abbreviated each of the high sounding appellations to suit her own taste, but Mr. Dutton never condescended to speak any but the full name.

I have often seen a smile on my mother's face, when, through the quiet air, we would hear his cracked voice calling loudly for Artaxerxes or Arthur Wellington, or some other name illustrious in history.

I was soon so absorbed in watching their merry pranks, and listening to their happy voices, that I forgot all about taking them to see the curiosities I had been planning to exhibit, and the sun was just setting when Mrs. Dutton came to call the children to their tea. During the time I had been there, messengers had been passing to and fro, carrying bread and molasses.

"What wonderful appetites they have," I said to Ashy.

"There's a good many to eat," he explained.

"And they eat a good deal too," I quietly said to myself.

Mrs. Dutton gave me a hearty invitation to go in and join with them at their repast, but I sadly recollected that my term of absence had long ago expired, so I could only regretfully decline the offered hospitality. As I glanced wistfully into the bright room with its wide fire-place, and low whitewashed ceiling, I could see that everything looked clean and pleasant, while the vision of many happy hours in store for me there sent me home with a glad heart.

After this the greater part of each day's play hours I spent with the Duttons and among them all, I liked Ashy the best. He was more like a girl in the gentleness of his disposition ; and yet he had all a boy's love of adventure, but he never led us into danger or mischief.



CHAPTER III.

FORESHADOWINGS.

TWO pleasant years passed away thus ; they would seem almost perfectly happy years to me now, but for the gradual failure of my father's health.

I distinctly remember what a sad day it was in our little home when he preached his last sermon.

On Saturday afternoon, mother brushed and laid out his clothes as usual. I saw the large tears dropping on the shining cloth, which she carefully wiped away with the corner of her clean white apron ; while my father as usual was

in his study, coming out when the early tea-bell rang, with a face paler and graver than usual.

While I was washing the tea dishes, they went and sat by the parlor fire. The late September evenings were getting chilly, and father nearly always required a fire. I did not know then that they thought he must die. They did not tell me; perhaps, because knowing how intensely I loved him, they may have feared to shock me.

When I came in from the dusky kitchen, I was surprised to see my mother, crouched on the rug beside my father's chair, her face hidden on his knee and her whole frame quivering with suppressed emotion. They did not hear me at the door; my surprise kept me silent. I mutely wondered why mother should seem so strangely troubled, and why should father look so sad? He spoke, how the words thrilled me:

"Meta, my beloved Meta, can't you think it will only be for a little while we shall be separated? Will you not help me to say to our Heav-

only Father, who has given us to each other for so many years, "Thy will be done?"

"Oh Stephen! I cannot lose you. I never told you how my whole life was absorbed in yours: how idolatrously I have loved you. God is punishing me for it. He wants all our hearts, and I have given mine almost wholly to you."

"You are not just to yourself Meta. I have known few lives purer or more devoted to the service of our Father in Heaven than yours, and he only takes me a little before you, to lead you closer to himself."

"How shall I live when I see you lying cold and silent in your coffin, deaf to all my woes, forever lost to me on earth? How can I endure the thought?"

"I may still be near to comfort you, Meta. I will not love you less there, but I believe a great deal more."

"Ah! but I shall not see you; I shall not even know if you are aware of my sorrow. You may be so far off among the angels, enjoying the riches of Heaven's glory that you will forget all

about earthly things, scarcely recognizing me, perhaps, when, bye and bye I meet you among your celestial companions."

"Meta, He who made the human heart, did not give to it this deep, underlying affection to last only through this life; the economy of his other works teaches me this. Let us the rather think of taking up our shortly sundered lives there, worshipping and loving forever."

For a while there was silence with the exception of my mother's half suppressed weeping. My father's face as I got a glimpse of it, where I stood in the shadow of the door, looked so strangely spiritual that I shuddered involuntarily.

Presently, mother spoke again. I can see now, as I review the memories of childhood, how unnecessary her remark; she, who had never, I believe, looked unkindly at her husband, said, reaching her hand out blindly towards him:

"Will you forgive me everything I have done amiss?"

Her voice trembled. I saw the muscles of

my father's face quiver, with an uncontrollable tenderness in his voice, he stooped down and kissing her, said :

"My own wife, I have nothing to forgive. I have received from you a devotion that has known no change."

I could stay no longer ; my heart was bursting ; a moment more and I should have betrayed the knowledge but just discovered.

Quietly slipping from the room, I went out through the half-closed outer door, and darting across the meadow, forgetting my childish terror of the darkness and silence of the forest, I rushed into its stillness, and threw myself down on a bed of moss, where on bright summer days, I often lay for hours watching the white clouds float across the sky, while I, in the meantime, built castles reaching almost to the blue, airy dome, of a wonderful future, spent with my father and mother in a beautiful home of my own upbuilding, whence poverty and care were to be forever banished.

My eyes were not turned skyward now, but with my face buried in the moss, I lay and and moaned; my heart seemed frozen with its new strange misery. Dumbly striving with my pain, I wondered if God could love me as they said he did, and yet take my father. He could not need him in heaven as we did on earth.

Presently the thought presented itself, might not God hear and answer prayer as he had done in the olden days.

With a pang I recollected that of late I had been very careless about praying. I wondered if God could be punishing me for my negligence. Now, I resolved to pray every hour. Christ had raised the dead, surely my father could be cured. I knelt by the moss covered mound, and asked as earnestly, I believe, as if I had actually seen the blessed Saviour who had healed the sick while on earth, if he would not spare my father to us since we needed him so much.

Gradually my heart felt comforted. I believed that in a little while I should see my fa-

ther well again. Alas ! I did not know that God often deals with his children in the wisest manner by refusing to grant their petitions.

I soon turned my steps homeward, washing my tear stained face in the brook. I went in silently and glancing through the open door I found my absence had not been observed. I passed into the kitchen and quietly waited the hour for prayers.

When I entered the parlor in answer to my mother's summons, everything seemed as usual, and, but for the increased fervor and tenderness of my father's prayer I might have yielded myself to the comforting belief that I was mistaken in my fears.

The next morning father prepared as usual for the labors of the day, while I assisted mother in her domestic duties, watching intently for some reference to the scenes of the previous, evening but in vain.

At last, I began to wonder if I might not in some way have mistaken their meaning, but, and the reflection was sadly forced upon me, if so,

why should my father cease preaching. I concluded to settle the matter by asking mother; so when we were preparing for church, I slipped into her room and eagerly whispered:

"Will father never preach again?"

For an instant she looked startled, and then turned so pale, I was afraid she was going to faint. Sinking into a chair, she leaned her head back wearily as though all hope had fled.

I ran for a glass of water, bitterly repenting my thoughtlessness; hoping to comfort her, I said:

"Don't be anxious, mother; I believe father will soon get well. I am asking God to cure him."

Such a pitiful look came into her face as she sadly replied.

"None but God can cure him. We can only trust in him."

"Have you asked him yet, mother?"

"A thousand times my child. We must believe that what he wills is best."

We walked to church, going very slowly

through the quiet street. I heard the crickets in the fields, and in a distant cluster of bushes ; a quail was calling for rain.

It comes to me so plainly now, that melancholy walk beneath the sombre autumn sky, and that mournful service, the last my father ever conducted. • His own eyes moist as he gazed in the tear stained faces of his parishioners, while he took leave of them, thanking them for their kindness through the years they had been together, and earnestly desiring that they might all meet in Heaven.

When the service was ended, many of the congregation came to speak to my mother, among them Squire Mounts, of whom, I generally stood greatly in awe. There crept a warmer feeling for him, about my heart, when I saw the great tears quivering in his eyes as he grasped my mother's hand.

I walked home with lame Sally, who spoke so tenderly of father, I felt that she at least believed there was little more of earth for him. It was

very unusual for her to show the feminine side of her nature, and I knew there must be strong cause for it when she did so.

At dinner, that day, father said :

"I did not think, Meta, that our friends cared so much for us. You see we can behold a little of the silver lining even in this cloud. By and by, when we get above the clouds, we shall see nothing but their brightness."


Mother made no reply. I think it would have been difficult for her just then to see any light in the midnight skies above her.





CHAPTER IV.

BEREAVEMENT.

 LOOKING back over the intervening years I find that the bitterness, the bitter sweetness of that time has not faded from my memory. Those events seem to have burnt themselves into my brain, while many another experience, that seemed at the time of more than passing interest has faded almost entirely from recollection; or appearing, like a half forgotten dream that coming, only gives a troubled sensation. My father still continued to give me lessons, but Ashy had to cease coming, we had been studying together and father was greatly pleased with the progress he was making. It was his desire

that I should repeat to Ashy the lessons he had taught me.

"It will benefit you," he said to me, "and you will also be doing good, and I wish you to learn that for your life work, beside, we never try to help others without receiving a larger recompense ourselves."

How much I enjoyed those long quiet hours in father's study; I tried to remember every word, to practice every precept. He rarely spoke to me of dying, I could not hide my emotion when he did so. He would merely say: "When I am gone you will do this Dora or study such a branch, giving me direction for conduct or lesson. I could see that the affection he cherished for us grew more intense as the hour of separation drew near. Mother said to him one day just as I was entering the room:

"You are making it harder every hour for me to give you up. You may think me rebellious but I cannot help asking that we may not be long separated."

"I believe you will soon follow me, Meta."

I could endure this no longer; bursting into tears I asked:

"Will you not pray that I may go too? I cannot live quite alone in this world without either father or mother."

"In His own good time my daughter if you love and obey God he will bring you to himself."

"Oh, father! You do not love me or you would not wish to leave me alone, and desolate, in this wide world."

"I love you Dora as perhaps few children are loved, but I commit you to the care of One, who loves you better even than I have ever loved my only child, and who alone knows the struggle it has been for me to give you up."

Stooping down he kissed my tear-stained face and with his arms about me feebly clasped me to the heart that yearned so pityingly over my sorrow. Presently kneeling beside him with my head on his knee, I lay for a long time listening,

while they talked, only interrupting to say that I had heard their first conversation on that evening so many weeks ago.

"My poor child, how bravely you have borne your griefs, working so nobly to save us trouble and yet trying to hide your anxiety."

He spoke so tenderly, all the while softly stroking my bowed head, that I thought my heart would break with suppressed emotion, but I was determined never again to distress my father with my grief if I could restrain my feelings. In my childish way, I determined the barn was just as good a place as any to cry in; but when I got alone I found the desire to do so was not so great as, when I sat looking at my father's pale face, and listening to the terrible cough.

I had another cause for anxiety; every day I discovered some new retrenchment in our little household. We never bought meat now, and I could not but notice that mother partook sparingly, if at all, of the occasional presents of meat

sent from a friendly farmer. Whether father noticed it or not I could not tell but I thought his fondness for favorite dishes had strangely changed. I frequently paid short visits to the more generous of our neighbors, hoping to get something nice to take home to my father; I was too proud even to hint for anything, but the gladness I felt whenever a present was given must have shown plainly without words.

The people were kind, but food and clothing for three cost a good deal, and my father had little store of wealth laid by for the rainy day. I have learned since that his unceasing benevolence was the cause.

I cannot think even now, after the lapse of so many years, without a feeling of sadness, of the grief it must have been to him, when thinking of leaving us unprovided for. I used to sit near the door at prayer time that I might escape unnoticed to my room to bathe my swollen face. His prayers for resignation that he might say, "Thy will be done," for the widows and father-

less and those drawing near to death nearly broke my heart. There was sometimes a suppressed agony in his voice while urging God's promises that must not fail. I am glad now when I think how suddenly and almost painfully the summons came. I had taken two lessons that day, I was in the habit of studying my lessons so perfectly that father need have but little trouble in teaching me. This day he seemed unusually well pleased with my recitation and when he dismissed me with the accustomed kiss, that usually ended my school duties for the day, he said:

"You will make a scholar some day, Dora; I hope you will continue your studies when I am gone, Remember, 'Where there's a will there's a way.'"

I gave the desired promise that I would do so, or at least make the endeavor, and then went about my household duties with a lighter heart than usual. Mother had gradually resigned these to my hands, as father desired to have her

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near him, while I was glad in any way to gratify his patient and few requests. Towards evening when my tasks for the day were all accomplished I took my seat beside him on the low footstool that had been my favorite seat ever since I could recollect.

That evening's conversation seems to have been photographed upon my brain. Father talked to us about Heaven and the happy time when we should be a family complete there and how, if permitted, he would come to us on earth when our hearts were the sorest, bringing comforting thoughts ; that he too would watch about our pathway, and when the time came for us to go home to God he would come to conduct us thither ; and thus continuing to talk just as he used to do long ago. I heard mother softly weeping ; my overburdened heart found little relief from tears that night. My father's voice sounded so like what I imagined the angels speech might be, that my heart stood still with the sudden fear that he was very soon to leave

us. A moment's silence ensued and then he said, hurriedly:

"Will you light the lamp Dora, it is so dark?"

I arose quickly to get the light, although the room was aglow with the sunset. Returning to the room I found my mother kneeling beside my father's chair and gazing imploringly into his white, pinched face, while she chafed his cold hands, holding them to her breast to bring back the warmth that would never more return.

"Run quickly for Mrs. Dutton," my mother hurriedly exclaimed.

Father roused a little and opening his eyes said feebly:

"Kiss me Dorothy, try to be good and love your mother."

I went to his side and as I kissed him his lips moved and I caught the sound of a faintly murmured "Good by."

In a few minutes I returned bringing Mrs. Dutton; we found, mother still kneeling. I

think father had spoken to her again and taken the last, long adieu of the one whom he loved so tenderly. He breathed once or twice after I went in, and then the vital spark went out. When mother saw that he was gone she rose, I think to leave the room, but fell fainting to the floor. Mrs. Dutton laid her on her bed while I staid alone with father. Ashy had been dispatched to the village for assistance, and in a little while, Mr. Wilton, the new minister who had succeeded father, came in with Squire Mounts, and in a short time the room was full of sympathizing friends.

I could not stay with my father when so many strange hands were about him, so, seeming to be needed by no one, and wishing to be alone with my misery, I slipped quietly down through the meadow, over the damp, partly frozen ground to the sheltering trees. Marco followed slowly behind, stopping, now and then, to utter a dismal howl: he was growing old now; soon, I thought, I shall be all alone, not even my dog

left to comfort and protect me. I was stunned with grief, and walked as in a dream. I went out into the woods not heeding in what direction. I had never ventured very far into the forest's depths alone before, but this night I thought only of getting far away from my trouble, and proceeding with this sole object in view heeded nothing about me till it grew dark and the night air felt chilly about my poorly protected body; I sat down to rest on an old log that lay across my path and gathering my scanty garments about me fell asleep.

How long I slept I did not know but the moon was shining through the trees when I awoke and I was so benumbed with the cold I could scarcely move. Marco was asleep at my feet, but was instantly alert when I began to bestir myself. I was bewildered and could scarcely realize where I was, and, beside, I felt faint with hunger, for I had taken nothing since dinner, and it was now nearly midnight.

My first thought was to return home, but

which way was I to go? Marco generally followed my steps and did not often lead me, or I should have known my safest plan would be to resign myself to his guidance. I feared too the darkness and silence of woods; the moon cast such strange shadows all around me, and, childish as it may seem, the thought of my dear, dead father terrified me. I recollected the promise he made, only a few hours before, to come to us in trouble; what if he should come now with that ghastly look I last saw on his face! I clung to the dog, who seemed to realize that I looked to him for protection, and passively following him, after a long weary walk, he brought me to the edge of the thicket. Before reaching home I was greatly alarmed at hearing men shouting, and when we came to the clearing I was astonished to see people passing in every direction about our place, with lanterns and torches; it was scarcely necessary, I thought, to look for anything with lights when the moon was shining so brightly; it did not occur to me

just then that they might be searching in the well and about the brook for me; neither did I wonder if my mother had discovered my absence, and was enduring on my account an added pang of misery, to the already accumulated amount of suffering her crushed heart was struggling beneath.

At first I could scarcely comprehend why such glad, thrilling shouts went up towards the midnight stars from the assembled crowds of men, or why the women sobbed so frantically, as Mr. Wilton led me wonderingly along to where my mother was standing near my father's outstretched form in the long low parlor.




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CHAPTER V.

STUDY.

FTER a few months mother exhibited a little of her former vivacity. Now and then she would smile, in a half absent way, as if the smile existed only in her face, and her heart was still dead to happiness. She tried to interest herself in plans for the future, but it must have been evident to every one but myself that her stay on earth was short.

After the painful discovery of our straitened circumstances, made by our friends on the night my father died, our larder was kept well supplied ; so much so that we often had something

to spare for lame Sally, and Mrs. Dutton's increasing brood of children.

I took up my lessons again with mother for teacher, as she would not in her loneliness permit me to attend the public school. Mr. Wilton gave me lessons in Latin and Geometry. I had in these advanced beyond my mother's knowledge.

I soon came to love the hour for recitation in his pleasant study. The housekeeper kept everything so beautifully neat; while the handsome pictures and rich furniture of the rooms gave to them an air of comfort and elegance, to which our plain surroundings were unaccustomed.

He was rich and could afford such luxurious upholstery, independently of his parish.

Sometimes, after I had finished my recitations, he would invite me into the parlor, where a grand piano stood, invitingly waiting for the master's touch upon the keys. I believe I enjoyed his performances fully as much as the sweet

low strains my mother used to draw from her guitar when I was a little child.

I must have been a flattering auditor, for I seldom heard him without weeping. This musical treat was soon the one, great joy of my life, appearing amid the sad scenes of my daily lot like a stray gleam of sunshine from some other world. One day, happening to turn about abruptly, and discovering my emotion, he said, rising quickly:

"Don't you like music, Dora?"

"Oh, yes; it's the greatest joy of my life to hear you play."

"Would you like to learn?"

I could not say no, and I was ashamed to say yes; my indebtedness to him was already so great.

"Silence gives consent," he said. "Suppose you take a lesson now?"

"I shall never be able to pay you, Mr. Wilton."

"Don't you know, Dora, there are some things we do in this world that God pays us for? I

am beginning to find they are my most profitable investment."

"Then I hope God will pay you for your kindness to me. Maybe father will thank you when he meets you in Heaven."

I looked up earnestly in his face, and must have revealed to him the gratitude my heart felt, for he smiled gently, and I saw tears in his eyes.

"Will you come now and take your first lesson?" he asked.

I did not reply, but went immediately to the instrument. How my fingers tingled as they touched the white keys!

They say that genius is sometimes transmitted, and if so a faint breath of that rare endowment may have descended to me, from an ancestor long since dead, who was a celebrated composer. Perhaps a better endowment had fallen to me in an untiring perseverance. Whichsoever it was, I soon gratified my teacher with my readiness to comprehend the lessons he gave, and with my diligent practice of them.

Mr. Wilton allowed me the use of his piano for practicing as many hours as I wished every day, and I soon availed myself largely of his permission, to the no small annoyance of his housekeeper, Mrs. Green, as I accidentally discovered one day.

Mr. Wilton said, laughingly, one evening after my lesson was ended :

"Mrs. Green wishes she was deaf, or the piano broken, such constant clatter gives her noises in her head."

"No wonder," I quietly thought, "that she has noises." When Mr. Wilton was out of hearing I often attempted difficult music, and the sounds produced were, doubtless, often unearthly.

"Perhaps I had better practice less," I said anxiously.

"I had rather you would practice more instead of less. I am expecting to see you an accomplished pianist, some day, my little girl."

How my cheeks flamed with pleasure ! I was not so small though that he should call me "lit-

the girl" any longer. I felt very large and womanly, now that I had reached my sixteenth year; and, beside, mother depended so much on me. She had resigned all charge of our little establishment into my hands, permitting me to make the purchases which were certainly not very extensive. What planning and thinking I used to expend on every sixpence that came into my possession!

Mrs. Mounts bought bits of fancy work that I had been learning how to manufacture, and many a night, long after mother was sleeping, my fingers were busy fashioning some article to adorn her rooms or person. She paid me handsomely, recommending my work to other ladies also. But the greatest delight I found in my newly acquired art of money-making was reserved for one day when Mr. Wilton asked me for some lace for his mother and sisters, after he found I was doing such work. I faithfully performed the allotted quantity, sitting up late and rising early to get it quickly completed.

What a happy day it was, when, with the package in which it was neatly folded lying safely in my pocket, I went to take my lesson! Now I could make some return, very small indeed, but it would be sufficient to show I was not forgetful of the weary hours devoted to me by my kind teacher.

After the lesson had been got through with but indifferently,—I was too much occupied with the intended offering in my pocket to play well,—I put the parcel in his hand, quite forgetting the pretty speech I had learned by heart, but, instead, saying only :

“Will you please accept this piece of work for your friends?”

“What is it, Dora, the fancy work I spoke about?”

I said “Yes,” and started immediately for the door.

“You must not go yet,” he said. “I am ever so much indebted for this beautiful work,” and he held it up admiringly.

"I don't want any money. Please let me do something for you." I burst into tears. I did not see his face, but his voice sounded strangely tender, as he said:

"Very well, Dora; only I wish it was something I could keep myself. I should treasure it carefully."

How glad and proud I felt, as I walked home in the bright sunshine; but after all, it was such a little thing to be glad and proud for. I was ashamed of my foolishness when I thought over the incident.

"I see I have only a child's heart if I *am* fifteen," I said sadly to myself. "I wonder if I shall ever be a real woman."

A few days after, as I went down-stairs in the early morning and opened the outer door, I discovered two large boxes of provisions setting in the porch, and beside them a parcel containing a complete outfit for myself and mother; such garments as I had never been the happy possessor of before. I soon awoke mother, I could

not keep such a delightful surprise to myself. When she came and saw the abundant array of good things, she said gently :

"We are indebted to Mr. Wilton for these. May the Lord bless him, for I can never repay his kindness."

All my joy was quenched; her words only aroused an angry pride within my breast. Could I not make even a slight return for all I had received, without being again recompensed a hundred fold ?

I allowed mother to put the things away ; in my wicked pride I could not bring myself to touch them. How my heart has ached since then as I have thought how my ill nature must have pained her grateful heart !

But my wickedness did not stop here. I told a lie to excuse myself from taking my lesson that day, the first I had missed. I complained of headache ; it was only my heart that was aching. I sent Clementina Dutton with a message to Mr. Wilton, that he need not expect me ; I did not

wish to waste his time even if my heart was bursting with reproach towards him.

In order to drive away the wretched feeling embittering every moment of that bright sunny day, — for it was a rarely beautiful day, — I resolved to get Mrs. Dutton to bring her work and the baby, and sit with mother, while I went to put some flowers on father's grave. It was a long walk, and I could go but seldom.

"Are you well enough, my child?" my mother asked. She looked searchingly at me, and I felt my face flush hot beneath her gaze.

"I am not sick, mother; it will do me good to go."

"You may go, but do not stay late; I am so lonely when you are away."

I went up to her and, kissing her, whispered softly:

"Will you forgive me, mother?"

"Yes, Dora. At your age I might have felt as you do."



CHAPTER VI.

CONVERSION.

THAT afternoon was the beginning of a new era in my experience. There was a quiet road, with very rarely a traveler, that led to my father's grave. The sun was shining hot and oppressive when I started. Mother came with me to the gate; there was a wistful look in her face, I know she longed to accompany me.

I stood a few minutes glancing over the surrounding landscape. Our house was on a hill that commanded a fine view of all the country side. The adjoining village could be plainly seen, its roofs glittering in the noontide sun-

shine ; one of the most plainly visible among them being that of the beautiful new church, consecrated only a few Sundays before. It stood where the old one had been and was surrounded by great trees that had looked down on several generations as they came up seeking the way to "Heaven's great Cathedral."

While I gazed, a hundred memories came trooping through my brain. Recollections of childhood, when with my hand in father's I went to the long services which were so tiresome in those childish days, and to the pleasanter Sabbath-school, in which he took so much interest. My father's feet would never press the well-worn path again, and soon, too, my own steps might be turned far away from the scenes of my childhood.

These and similar thoughts brought tears of deep sorrow into my eyes, till for dimness I could scarcely distinguish the fine house on the hill, where Squire Mounts and his fashionable family lived, of whom I was sometimes a little envious,

or the parsonage, where Mrs. Green was now preparing Mr. Wilton's dinner.

Away beyond the little town, like a silver thread, I saw the river widening; along whose banks father and I had walked in the pleasant summer days of long ago. Would I ever again experience happy days like those? Great fleecy clouds were piling up in the sky; such clouds I used to watch with delight, as I lay under the trees; they only seemed unchanged, and yet they were forever changing.

Presently I started along the shady lane. In places as I passed the trees arched overhead, and the way was so unfrequented the grass grew quite across it. With the basket on my arm, containing the flowers I was taking to strew on the grave, I walked rapidly on, my mind so occupied I scarcely realized how swiftly I was going.

Conscience was busy at work. The question of how I had been living since father's death seemed forced upon me. Was I accomplishing

the work he would wish? Was I growing better myself? I felt sadly conscious that since our separation I had been growing worse instead of better.

"I am drifting farther from Heaven every day," I murmured. "Can it be that I shall never reach there at last? He told me my heart must be changed before I could be with and like Christ."

With an aching heart I walked steadily on, my dejection every moment growing deeper. When I reached the graveyard, the stillness all around, unbroken, except by the songs of birds among the trees, seemed to oppress me.

My father's grave was in the farthest corner, beneath the willow and cypress trees, of which there was a profusion in the graveyard. Through their leafy branches I could get glimpses of the broadening river, as it went to join the ocean a few miles below.

As I knelt by the grass-covered mound, yielding to despairing thoughts, there came to mind these words of Jesus:

"Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

"Can those words reach my case, I wondered? Might I not come to Jesus? Surely he died for me." Raising my head towards Heaven I cried earnestly for pardon. How long I prayed I could not tell, but it seemed like hours, when, just as I was ready to despair, I cried:

"Lord Jesus, receive me ! Save me !"

Like a ray of sunlight penetrating a dungeon, so I felt the light of Heaven entering my soul. Brighter and brighter it shone. I rose to my feet. The trees, the sky, and the distant river, were bathed in purer light. I exclaimed aloud:

"Is not this the joy of the redeemed? Am I not God's child?"

My heart was bursting to tell my new-found happiness. Through the fragrant evening air I hastened along the accustomed lanes, resolving to call at the parsonage on my way home. The

sun had set when I reached there, and the twilight had so far deepened that the light of the full moon shone distinctly enough to cast my shadow before me, as I passed up through the row of elms leading to the door. Meeting Mrs. Green in the garden I asked anxiously if Mr. Wilton was at home.

"I heard him at the piano a few minutes ago," she replied.

As I listened, I could hear the music floating out through the open window into the moonlight. As I heard the rich, fairy-like strains my heart began to fail me; I found it difficult to acknowledge having given away so easily to my ill nature. I asked myself if it was really necessary I should do so. While I hesitated, words of Scripture were again, as at the grave, impressed upon my mind:

"Confess your faults one to another." I remembered the joy I there experienced and which was still filling my soul, and then hesitated no longer.

A moment more and I was standing by the in-

strument. Mr. Wilton looked up, and when he saw me ceased playing. I reached out my hands, hurriedly exclaiming :

"Oh, Mr. Wilton, will you forgive me? I believe God has."

"I have nothing, my dear child, to forgive." He spoke as though astonished, but he folded my hands tenderly in his.

"You do not know, you could not believe, how wicked I have been; " I exclaimed; and then I confessed the temptation and sin of the morning, not withholding a single fault. When I had ceased speaking, he said gently :

"My poor little girl, I have still nothing to forgive, and, now that I have discovered your honesty and independence of character, I shall love you more dearly than ever."

As he spoke, he stooped down and kissed my throbbing brow. I was too much absorbed in what I had yet to say to experience any feeling of surprise at such an unusual mark of regard from him.

"What father told me before he died, and what you have often told me, I have found to-day to be true; only the half was not told me of the joy and peace that comes with the love of Christ," I exclaimed hurriedly.

"How have you found this, Dora?" he eagerly asked.

And then I told him of the distress of mind and the fullness of rest that followed, which I had that day experienced. His very hands seemed to thrill with pleasure and his face to shine.

"Let us thank God together," he said huskily.

In a moment we were kneeling side by side, in the moonlight. I had never before heard such a prayer as he uttered that night, unless it was when father was nearing the celestial city, and the glory from its opening gates was flooding his soul. Mrs. Green heard his voice out in the garden and came in. The solemnity of the time reached her heart, unused to the melting mood, and when we arose from our knees we found her

weeping by the door. It was the beginning of a new life to her, and to-day I believe she is walking with the angels by the throne.

Mr. Wilton accompanied me home; he wished to share my mother's joy. On our way we met Ashy, who returned with us. How eagerly I tried to point him to the Saviour I had just found, and to lead him in the path of peace.

"It is grander, Ashy, than all our studies, better than Astronomy, for Heaven is beyond and above the stars."

"Yes, Dora; and your father is there."

"Oh, Ashy, better than that, Christ is there."

He looked surprised. Was it possible I could love any one better than my father!

When we came to the gate I saw mother watching for me, in the door-way. My heart bounded with delight. I was now no longer afraid that she and father would wander alone through bliss; I, their child, banished not only from the presence and companionship of my parents forever, but also, what was even more to be

deplored, deprived of the favor and fellowship of my Creator. I thought with glad satisfaction that in a few years we might meet, never to be separated ; to be pure and happy forever.

I ran up the steps, and, flinging my arms about her, exclaimed :

"Oh, mother, I am so happy to-night !"

"What is it, Dora?" she asked, surprised at my manner.

"God has received me for his child, mother. I found him to-day at father's grave."

"My darling child," she murmured, folding me to her breast. "I am willing to go home to God now."





CHAPTER VII.

ORPHANED.

TWO months after my eventful visit to my father's grave I was an orphan. Mother faded gradually away, suffering but little pain. One by one the cords were severed, until, one bright Monday, like a melting cloud, she floated out of our sight.

After she was taken seriously ill I scarcely left her bedside day or night. Those few remaining hours seemed so precious to me; for when she was gone I should be all alone: the relatives of both parents away across the ocean and less beloved than the friends here.

The day she died I saw in the early dawn that she was dying. The night previous she had requested me to sit alone with her ; friends lay in another room. Ashy was with us every night. Through those long, quiet hours she told me more of her early life, particularly her wedded life, than I had ever known before ; of her happy home in vine-growing Kent, where she had met my father and consented to accompany him to the wilds of America. She talked for a long time of the bitterness of the separation which had so early loosened her hold on life. Afterward, with strange calmness, she advised me about my immediate future, the new cares that would so soon rest upon me. As the day wore on, she said :

"My darling, had you not better leave me now to the care of friends, and retire to your own room ?"

I understood her reason for the request ; I said :

"My precious mother, I can endure seeing the

shadow stealing over your face; let me be with you while I can, for in a few hours I shall have no mother, no gentle, saintly mother." And I burst into a flood of tears.

It pained her to see my distress. Hitherto, when near her side, I had controlled my emotions, but now my anguish was too strong for repression as I realized how immediate was our separation. With her arm about me she said so gently:

"My poor, stricken child, the Lord help you."

Laying my head on the pillow beside her I shed bitter tears I cannot think of that hour, even now, with calmness. Before the people came in we took our last farewell, alone, in the gray dawn of the early morning. She became drowsy after that, and only when just at the river did she seem to realize my presence.

"Take hold of my hand, Dorothy," she said excitedly; then, stretching out her other hand, she said, softly:

"O Christ, *thou* art my all, my Heaven is in thee."

Then she lay silently, breathing slower, and slower, until the last breath came, and she was in Heaven.

Mr. Wilton, Mrs. Dutton and Mrs. Mounts were standing by the bedside, weeping.

They seemed to me like persons in a dream, I heard their voices as though they were a long way off; I did not think of crying then; everything grew dark; I seemed to be floating away into the air; half unconsciously I wondered if I was dying too.

Presently I ceased to think at all. The first I can remember, I was lying in my own room, on my bed, and the afternoon sun was shining high up on the wall. I was worn out with watching and excitement, and it seemed only reasonable that nature should claim a little rest. I was, however immediately able to take charge of everything as heretofore. After everything was over and the house arranged, Mrs. Mounts invited me to spend a week at her house, I dreaded going; I knew the customs of her house

and family would ill accord with my sore heart. But I asked, in lieu of a wiser counsellor, the advice of simple-hearted Mrs. Dutton.

"Go by all means," she said, "it will liven you up better than anything I know of." Her unsophisticated mind was dazzled by the superior style of their living. I did not ask Mr. Wilton; I think he would have said: "Stay at home."

I went, and it was the longest and dreariest week I ever experienced. The only cheery spot through it all was when I went to take my music lessons. I practiced on Mrs. Mounts, piano while stopping there.

There was a secret of Miss Jennie Mounts, which I fancied I discovered, and that was that she would very gladly take charge of Mr. Wilton's heart and home for life. Sometimes I thought he knew it and was thinking seriously of it. He was there nearly or quite every day, and they made it so pleasant for him I would have gone quite as often had I been in his place.

One day after coming in from lessons Jennie said in her haughtiest way : "How long are you going to trouble Mr. Wilton with those useless lessons?"

"I cannot say ; probably not much longer," I replied.

"Well, for his sake I should hope not, it must be a great bore to him, when he has so many other duties." My temper was aroused ; I answered in a similar tone.

"If it is, he can tell me himself "

"Don't be saucy, child," she said, angrily.

I left the room and the house, walking directly for home ; on my way I stepped in to Mrs. Dutton's ; she saw there was something wrong.

"What is the matter, dearie?" Her voice was so sympathizing I burst into tears.

"Oh, I am so homesick, so lonely," I said, hysterically.

"There is something else the matter ; have those pert girls been saying anything rude?"

"It was I spoke rudely. Oh, I am so wicked,

so miserable!" Ashy was in the little room, I did not know he was there; in a moment he was at my side, looking down so pityingly at me with those soft brown eyes.

"Come up to the house with me, won't you, Dora?" he asked. I gladly acceded to his request, and it was not long before he had discovered the cause of my grief.

"Do you think Mr. Wilton is tired teaching me, Ashy?"

"I know he is not," was the hearty reply, "but if it will be any relief to you I will find out some way. You didn't know he was giving me lessons now?"

I forgot my own troubles in Ashy's good fortune. "Oh, I am so delighted!" I exclaimed. "You will be a scholar and great man yet. Won't I be proud of my boy then?"

"I expect to be proud of my girl, too," he said laughingly. "I am going to tell you something. Mr. Wilton thinks you are very clever, and he wishes to send you to school."

"It is no use, Ashy," I said firmly; "after this week I am going to be independent; I am sixteen now; labor is remunerative, and I shall go to service if I can find nothing better, and earn money to educate myself. I mean to be a scholar; you know I promised father I should."

"I like that spirit," Ashy replied, "but you would be wiser to take assistance."

"If you could help me, Ashy, I might consent, but there is no one else that I shall be indebted to any longer, so that's the end of it."

"Well, Dora, I hope you will succeed, and I believe you will too."

"Do you think, Ashy, I could teach school?" I asked hesitatingly.

He looked up delightedly. "Of course you could; I never thought of that."

"Or maybe I could give music lessons to very little children," I said somewhat doubtfully.

"Very little children, indeed! Why, I heard Mr. Wilton telling some ladies the other day that you had the best expression and execution,

I think those were the words, of any person in town."

"You good old soul," I exclaimed, enthusiastically, "you are always making me happy; when I am gone I shall miss you more than anyone, except Mr. Wilton."

"Well, you can write every week, that is one consolation."


It was a consolation, as I found through the long months when I had only strange faces and scenes to look upon, and when my heart was hungering for news of home and friends, some of whom, how dearly loved I sadly discovered before I again beheld the accustomed haunts of childhood.






CHAPTER VIII.

CHANGES.

ATURDAY evening came at last, when my week's penance ended. Miss Jennie repented her unkindness and was more gracious than formerly, while the squire and Mrs. Mounts seemed anxious to have me spend the winter with them, but several grown-up sons and daughters sufficiently engaged their sympathies and attention and I did not wish to occupy a useless place in any circle. I could certainly have found ways of rendering myself sufficiently useful to relieve my mind of a feeling of indebtedness.

I went home on Saturday evening, thinking to



stay alone, but the house was so silent as the evening wore on I became too timid to brave the darkness and solitude, and went down for Alexandria, now a good seized-maiden of eight summers. I did not retire early; my little roommate was sleeping soundly in my own crib which I had exhumed from the garret, and filled with quilts and pillows for her to lie on. I carried my lamp into the parlor, and taking a book sat down to read, but it lay unread in my lap; my thoughts were busy with the future that was now becoming so sternly real to me. What was I to do, which way turn? I might manage to live on, in a dreary way, in the old house; my fancy work would probably keep me in bread; but how could I secure the education which I felt was only just getting its foundation laid. I determined to cease troubling Mr. Wilton much longer; he might not think it an irksome duty, but I knew others were beginning to complain.

"The world is wide enough for them and me

too," I exclaimed, perhaps a little passionately, "and I won't annoy anyone with my difficulties." How brave and strong I felt then! Thanks to my father's severe training, I had a physique capable of enduring any strain of labor or study. I rarely knew what weariness was. "How thankful I should be to God for health," I thought, and then I commenced enumerating my mercies. I had been in a despairing mood, wondering why my life was harder than others, and why so much was laid on my young shoulders — bearing for so many years sickness of friends, separation, poverty, and loneliness. But when I began to review the past I remembered so many proofs of my Heavenly Father's love I felt like praising instead of repining. "If we do have sorrows here," I thought, "it is only for a little while, and it will be all joy by and by. If I could only be of some use in the world, do something to make others happier and better, and show my gratitude to God who has done so much for me!"

I was thinking so intently on my indebtedness and comparative uselessness that I did not hear the outer door open and shut, nor the footsteps echoing along the silent hall, until I was startled by hearing Mr. Wilton speak my name as he stood beside me.

"Why, Mr. Wilton, can that be you?" I asked, with surprise.

"I assure you it is my own self," he said, smilingly, as he held out his hand.

"I have been thinking about you so many times this evening, but I certainly did not anticipate seeing you."

"I am a little surprised myself," he replied; "but I saw your window lighted and wondered if you could be here alone, and getting anxious about you resolved to come and see about it."

"You will make a bankrupt of me, Mr. Wilton; I shall never be able to repay all your kindness."

"Some day, Dora, you may be able to give me far more than you have ever received."

"I will if it is ever possible. I would make a great sacrifice to help anyone who has befriended me as you have done."

"I hope I shall never need you to make any sacrifice for my sake, my child; but remember I have your promise for something great someday."

"I shall remember," I replied frankly. "It is not often I love anyone intensely, but when I do it is a passion; and I think you have a right to the largest share of my liking capabilities."

He looked at me curiously, then, as I thought, sadly.

Suddenly I was shocked to think I had expressed myself so plainly; now it occurred to me, what I said innocently might be construed otherwise.

"You understand my meaning, Mr. Wilton?" There must have been a startled look in my face.

"Yes, Dora, I understand, you give me all a sister's loving devotion," he said quietly.

"A sister's and a friend's, and shall forever," I replied fervently.

"Perhaps not forever." He smiled as he spoke.

"Oh, do not say that, my heart will never change."

"You do not understand my meaning, child, but perhaps it is best so."

That was all that was said upon the subject, but after that I felt we were to be friends until death. How rich I felt after this, for had I not the noblest brother in the world? Ashy told Mr. Wilton shortly afterward that I feared I was occupying too much of his time. He said:

"She thinks if you are willing that she won't come again. You never thought it a trouble having her come, did you, Mr. Wilton?" Ashy asked in a sudden burst of confidence.

"I never thought it anything but what it really is, one of my sweetest pleasures," Mr. Wilton replied, "and she must not leave: I should consider her ungrateful if she were thus to leave me."

"I will tell her what you say; she has been

feeling very badly since she was told about it."

Mr. Wilton did not ask Ashy who had spoken so to me, but turned abruptly away leaving my knight-errant to recite the remainder of his lesson next day.

"I didn't mind losing the lesson a bit," Ashy exclaimed to me afterward. "But, mind you, Dora, if Mr. Wilton is good he has a temper of his own, I know."

"Why, Ashy, what makes you think so?" I asked greatly amused, to think he could see any fault in his paragon.

"Because he looked so white when I told him there were two or three complained about it, and that you were going to give up studying for awhile and go to service, to earn the money to put you through college, or whatever you call those girls' schools. For fear he might be cross with you I said it was because you were so independent, when he said:

"'She has more nobility of nature than every one of them put together.' He looked as though

he would like to shake them all," Ashy added, thinking none the less of the teacher on that account.

"Ashy, my child, if you talk much longer I shall be too vain to speak to you pretty soon," I said laughingly.

"Mr. Wilton said all the nice things, you needn't blame me, sister mine. But he said in his determined way that you shall never go to service. 'She must be guided by me in this. I will advance the money, and she can pay me back some day.' Those were his very words."

"It is no use, Ashy, I cannot go any farther in his debt."

"You had better not go too much against his wishes; it isn't every orphan girl has a friend like him."

"I have no claim on him; besides, think what he has done for me already!"

"He takes pleasure in doing it; I don't see but what he gets more than he gives, and has plenty of money; why, I heard Squire Mounts say the other day he was richer than any other man

in town, and that he gives away a large income every year. If I understand him, as I believe I do, there is no one in the world he would rather help than you. I know more about men than you do."

"Well done, Master Ashy, you have made your maiden speech now."

"It was to a very contrary maiden then," and Ashy turned angrily away. But I was not overruled.

Mr. Wilton came, and we reasoned the subject for an hour or more. I declined his offer most gratefully, but firmly. I saw he was grieved, and my own heart ached while I refused. "I do not know what is the reason I can't do as you wish me, but there is some perverse, wicked spirit, I suppose it must be, within me that is inexorable whenever I try to reason away my scruples."

"You won't ever be dependent on your husband, I presume?" There was a touch of bitterness in his voice that pained me.

"I haven't thought much about a husband

yet," I replied gently; "perhaps I'm not made like other people, or the sadness of my lot may have kept such thoughts from me, but I think if I had a husband I loved, I should be glad to depend on him."

There was a peculiar expression flitted across his face for an instant, then he took my hand in his, saying:

"I shall say too much if I talk any longer with you, Dora. I will go away, but not without the hope that sometime you will let me help you."

I could keep silent no longer.

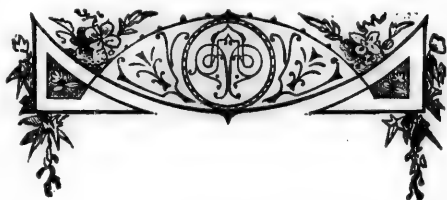
"I have grieved you, Mr. Wilton," I exclaimed tearfully. "Will you believe me if I say there is no one in the world I would so soon be indebted to as you?"

"I believe you, my own little girl," he said, hurriedly, and stooping down kissed my face; I was surprised, but then, wasn't I his sister? However, it might be better for us to be more formal in our intercourse. Asby had never taken

a brother's privilege ; someway I did not much wish him to do so ; of the two brothers I discovered Mr. Wilton was the favorite. I stood watching him as he walked away, feeling just as proud of the handsome, noble man as if he were indeed my brother by right of blood and not merely friendship. "How much I have lost all these years by being deprived of a brother's love," I thought, as I turned from the bright sunshine into the lonely silent house.




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CHAPTER IX.

SCHOOL.

 A few mornings after this, Ashy burst into the room where I was working and studying together, with a line from Mr. Wilton, saying he had procured me an excellent situation in his native city. I was to be assistant in a boarding-school, with opportunities for taking lessons myself. My salary, moderate at first, would soon be increased, if I gave satisfaction. "You are a cherub, Ashy," I exclaimed rapturously.

"No, Mr. Wilton is the cherub, for it's he

that's bringing about all your good fortune. You had better thank him and not expend all your gratitude on me," and Ashy looked decidedly cross.

"I shall not write a single letter if you don't grow more amiable."

"Well, I like to see justice done; you treat your best friend most ungratefully."

"What can I do to please you, Ashy?"

"Tell Mr. Wilton you appreciate his kindness."

"I intend doing so directly," and without further hesitation I put on my hat and went to the parsonage. My face must have been in a glow, the gladness in my heart must have shone in my face. I did not ring the bell, I was quite certain at that hour of finding Mr. Wilton in his study. I went up-stairs softly, and tapped at his door; I could hear him pacing to and fro, I was obliged to knock the second time. He must be studying particularly hard this morning, I thought. In a second or two he opened the door; when he saw

me he looked surprised, and threw a backward glance at his coat, lying on a chair. Mrs. Green told me once that he never liked to be found in his dressing-gown.

"I cannot thank you, Mr. Wilton, but I am so glad the favor came from you."

"You will accept *something* from me then?"

"All the favors I receive from any one, I accept from you."

I answered heroically, for my heart was getting so full I was afraid the tears would come. He noticed my flushed cheeks and glistening eyes, I am sure but did not try to spare me.

"When will you leave us, Dora?" He spoke so gently that it made it extremely difficult to answer calmly:

"The day after to-morrow: if necessary."

"So soon? We shall scarcely know how to get along without you."

"Oh! will you miss me any at all? I had feared you, at least, would be relieved when I was gone. I have been such a trouble to you,

but I did not want to be. I would do anything to serve you."

Then the tears came in earnest, and I laid my head on the study table and wept unrestrainedly. He did not disturb me; I heard the door shut and thought he had left the room, so I sobbed quietly to my heart's content. I began to realize how painfully I should feel the separation; hitherto, only pleasant thoughts had mingled in my plans for getting away and supporting myself independently of all the world; but now the unpleasant reflection was forced upon me, that, in going away, I should be separated from Mr. Wilton, and Ashy, and Mrs. Dutton's comfortable brood, for whom I had come to have quite a maternal feeling. There was, too, the home of my childhood, for which I had a most intense affection, and the two graves under the cypress trees; I could no longer water the daisies that grew upon them, nor gather the violets that grew above my mother's face.

But I recollected with a pang how long I had

been keeping Mr. Wilton from his sermon. "How thoughtless I have been," I exclaimed half aloud. I raised my head, and glancing across the table was startled at seeing him sitting there, looking quietly at me.

"I am sorry to have wasted so much of your time, Mr. Wilton. How patient you always are with me."

"Do you think so? I did not get wearied waiting for you to raise your head. I shall not be able to look at you very often, now."

"I cannot but feel glad of it, for your sake."

"You need not be *glad*, Dora. I should be glad to have you with me always."

As he spoke I noticed he gave a half sigh that I had several times caught him suppressing.

"I must go now, with my thanks unsaid. Good-by, my brother." I looked up shyly, I had never addressed him so before.

"Good-by, little sister. I will come up this afternoon and give you the necessary directions," and he pressed my hand kindly.



CHAPTER X.

A PLEASANT MEETING.



EVERYTHING in the school was, for a time, very strange, but not altogether unpleasant. I had a comfortable room on the second floor. It was a great building, with so many rooms and corridors I thought I should never get accustomed to it. When I had been examined in the various branches, in order to discover which I was most capable of teaching, Dr. Kye, the principal, decided that I would succeed best in Mathematics, for a beginning, with the possible prospect of taking classes in other branches before long.

Professor Auhlman, the head music teacher, with whom from the first I was very favorably impressed, pronounced me capable of taking a few primary pupils in music, for which I was very grateful to him. My fondness for music made me willing even to teach stupid, indifferent learners.

Notwithstanding I had what they considered a pretty full programme of duties to fulfill, I yet managed to get plenty of time for study, and had not much fear but that I could graduate at the end of one year; thanks to Mr. Wilton's painstaking teaching.

So soon as Professor Auhlman discovered my devotion to his favorite art, he generously insisted on giving me lessons himself, twice a week. My proficiency was such as seemed fully to satisfy him.

One day, after I had been unusually successful in pleasing him with my lesson, he said:

"You will make de most superbe pianist. I wish you were my own child."

"Your little Bertha will be far better than I, probably."

"Maybe so, maybe so," he said, in his slow, reflective way, "but you are very goot."

Before leaving N. Mr. Wilton said to me :

"I fear you will be frightened when you come to face those young ladies."

"I shall not, I think, allow myself to be frightened by any one. If they will allow me to teach them I shall do my best, if not, I can but fail."

I did feel considerably abashed, and to confess the truth, a little bit afraid, when I saw the handsomely dressed ladies, my associate teachers, and the still more elegantly appareled young maidens, many of whom were in the classes I was there to instruct. My own exceedingly shabby wardrobe cost me many a pang, and probably a few unshed tears gave to my purple eyes, as Ashy playfully styled them, a very misty look. I tried to crush this unworthy feeling of cowardice out of my heart ; the heart that used to throb so despairingly when I was robing myself for the

social gatherings, which formed a principal part of our amusements.

Notwithstanding the ill-concealed contempt and sneers that were my every-day lot, I managed to perform my duties with quite a degree of comfort to myself.

Dr. Kye, the principal, was, I thought, a little dignified and unapproachable, and it appeared to me that the teachers stood too much in awe of him. I resolved not to be afraid of him, even if I lost my place ; cringing fear of any I thought to be but a species of slavery. I had seen the teachers quiver when he came into their class rooms. I devoutly wished he would come into mine.

For some time I waited in vain, but my time came at last. I was hearing one of the advanced classes recite ; the teacher was ill, and it was at her request I had assumed the charge. I knew I was quite capable of teaching them, although the class consisted of young ladies whom I knew despised their plain child-teacher.

When the doctor came in he looked surprised, and then in a rather severe tone of voice said :

"I am surprised, Miss Thurston, to see you here."

"I am somewhat surprised myself, sir," I politely replied.

"Tell me how it comes that you have such a class?"

"I had rather the teacher to whom the class belongs would explain to you, sir; the period for recitation is slipping by."

I knew it was saucy for me to speak as I did, but his voice and manner annoyed me exceedingly.

"It is not necessary for me to ask the teacher. You will please explain to me yourself, Miss Thurston."

"The teacher was taken ill, and the other teachers were engaged; I was at liberty for the period and offered my services. I will desist if it is your desire."

"Proceed with the recitation."

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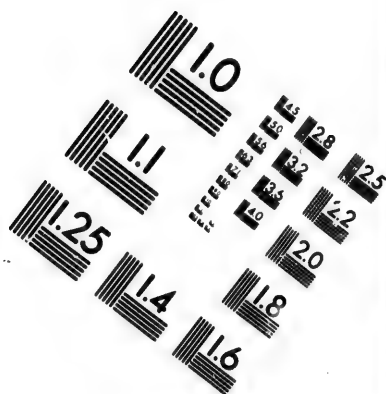
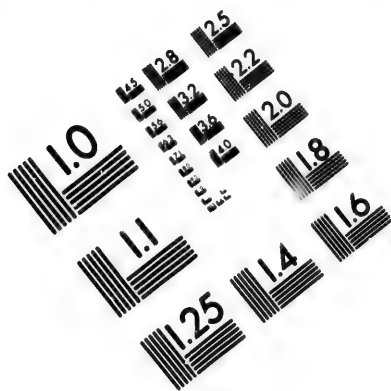
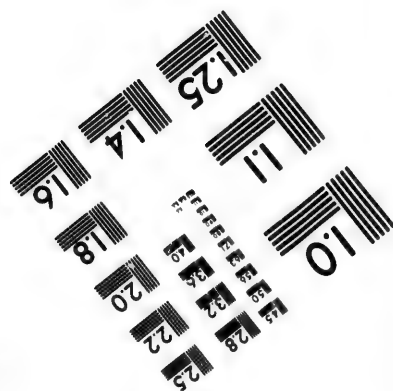
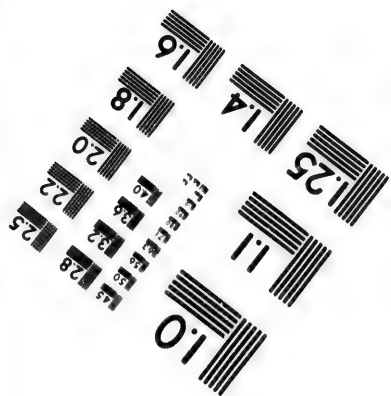
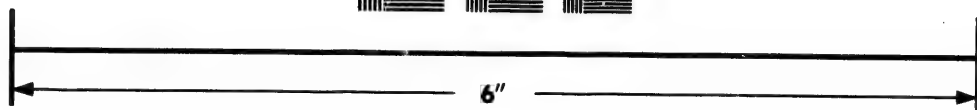
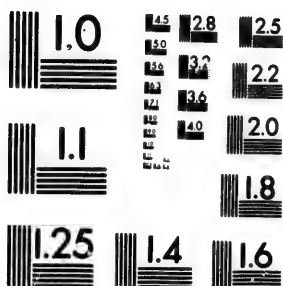


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I did so, and have seldom seen a class do better. I had awakened their sympathies, and they were, as they expressed it, "*frantic*" with delight to hear me talk fearlessly to the doctor.

I made no reply: the annoyance had passed. I was afraid my independence had turned me out of a good situation, and a home that was every day becoming pleasanter. I had no confidantes in school and so was obliged to bear my anxiety alone. I performed my duties for the remainder of the day with a heavy heart, dreading to hear the bell for faculty meeting that evening. When I went into the library, I found the doctor there alone; he bowed pleasantly and said:

"Really, Miss Thurston, I should congratulate you on your success as a teacher. I shall write to your friend Mr. Wilton, who, by the way, is a dear friend of my own, telling him how ably you are acquitting yourself."

"You lovely man," I mentally exclaimed, "how I should like to put my arms around your

neck and ask your forgiveness." I said aloud, with a little quiver in my voice :

"I am very grateful to you for your kind remarks, and shall endeavor to merit them."

Just then several of the teachers came and nothing further was said, but that was the best faculty meeting I ever attended.

Gradually I came into favor with the teachers. I was always willing to take an extra class, or lend a helping hand in any way, and, what especially pleased them, was ready at all times to take charge of a pedestrian excursion ; the long walks that would have exhausted most of the teachers seemed only necessary exercise to me.

One day I was walking along quickly at the head of a small detachment of pupils — we had gone a little beyond our time, and were in danger of being late for some of the classes — when I was startled at hearing some one speak my name. Almost instantly I knew the voice, and looking up saw Mr. Wilton coming towards me. It was against the rules to have a gentleman walk with

us on the street. What was I to do? With my usual impulsiveness I resolved to give up my situation rather than lose that opportunity of speaking to Mr. Wilton, and putting out my hand I said joyously:

"Oh, how glad I am! I did not know I should be so delighted to see you."

"Dr. Kye will excuse me walking with you," Mr. Wilton said, and so set my mind at rest on that account. But as we were near our own grounds it did not matter so much; beside, it was a crowd of the younger girls, and I knew a few words of explanation would make it right with them.

"Shall I see you again?" was the first question I asked.

"Yes, I shall spend the evening with you, if spared."

"Oh, it nearly takes my breath away!" I whispered, and as I glanced in his face I thought I had never seen him look so handsome and so happy. We did not say much; what was the

use? I could not tell him all I wished, nor ask the questions that were filling my brain, in two long hours; what then were five or six minutes? It was enough to know that he was at my side, and that we were walking along together towards that delightful evening. I went into the class room, it was the first period in the morning. I wondered if night would ever come.

All day long,—and it was a long day,—I watched the hands of the clock; the minutes seemed to be hours. I looked at my watch so often that Dr. Kye, who was in the school-room for some time, came to where I was standing and whispered pleasantly:

“Do the minutes go very slowly?”

“Yes, never so slowly before since I can recollect.”

“I shall feel it my duty to report that speech to your friend.”

“Oh, you may! Mr. Wilton knows I love him better than any one else in the world. You know he is my brother.”

"I did not know that."

"Well, he is, and the best brother in the whole world."

"I should not be surprised if he were," and the doctor smiled knowingly.


As he walked away I only wondered what had come over him, he had become so very affable with me. Could it be that my fearless manner in the class-room had wrought the change? He must be a coward at heart, I concluded, or he would not be afraid of a mere child; and I looked after him with a feeling in my heart bordering on contempt. How mistaken I was I discovered some time afterward, along with a good many other strange things.





CHAPTER XI.

A REVELATION.

VENING came at last, and found me robed with more than usual care for my anticipated interview. I was ready half an hour before I was summoned and was beginning to despair of being called at all, thinking perhaps Mr. Wilton and the doctor had become so interested in conversation that I had been forgotten. I was nearly crying with disappointment when the maid came with the dainty little card and the well-known handwriting in one corner saying: "Come directly." I did come directly and surprised him with my promptness. He was stand-

ing with his back to me, in the doctor's parlor, as I entered, looking at some engravings. I went softly up to him; the door was ajar and he did not hear me enter. I slipped my hand into his arm, saying:

"Won't you speak to your little girl?"

He turned around quickly, with such a pleased face, and asked:

"Are you still my little girl?"

"Why, certainly I am. But I am not little now. I have grown so terribly lately, I feared you would think I was too large to be little any more."

"I like you just as well large," he said, playfully.

We had been talking busily for some time on different topics, chiefly about our friends at N., when Mr. Wilton said abruptly:

"Do you know Ashy is engaged to be married, Dora?"

"Must everybody come to that? I hope you won't, Mr. Wilton, at least not very soon."

"Have you never loved anyone thus, Dora?"

"No, but I have been expecting to, and fearing a little lest I should. I should hate the man I loved better than you."

"And so should I." He spoke with an energy that reminded me of the remark that Ashy once made: "He has a temper of his own." I was glad to change the subject soon; somehow I felt it was a dangerous topic, I scarcely knew why, but there was something troubling me that I felt resolved that night to have settled, so with a slightly fluttering heart I said:

"Would you believe me, Mr. Wilton, if I tell you that I have been just a little jealous of you and Jennie Mounts. Ashy's letters have been making me so; I am beginning to distrust that boy."

"Why should you be jealous of us, my child?"

"If she were your wife you would not then seem so much my friend. You would give *her* all your heart, of course."

"Do you expect me to live alone all my days, Dora? I want some one to make my home happy as well as the rest. You cannot imagine how lonely I am sometimes."

The tears came into my eyes, while my heart ached with some nameless dread.

"Oh, how dreary it seems. I thought I should be perfectly happy this evening, but we get talking about such sad possibilities, but it is no more than I deserve. I am getting so careless and selfish since I came here. I did not think once that I should ever be so wicked again."

"You have not lost the joy you found that summer in the graveyard, I hope, Dora?"

"Sometimes I fear that I have sinned that blessed peace away; I seem to be going all wrong, besides, I am not keeping the promise I made to father, to work for others."

"Have patience, my dear friend, I believe a noble working-time awaits you. Many prayers have been and still are being offered for you, and they will yet be answered."

"I used to think more about Heaven and living for it than I do now ; it seemed, if I only got safely there, it would not matter much if my life on earth were a failure, if it were only pure and good, but now I fear the desire to succeed in this world, is stronger than any other desire in my heart."

"You get discouraged too easily. You are young, and it is natural to be ambitious, but, by and by, when you get a few more disappointments from life's experiences, you will see how poor a thing, at best, this world of ours is to satisfy the cravings of the heart, and then you will find that only the love of Christ, and the practice of his divine precepts, are capable of making us supremely happy in this world."

Our conversation, was kept up steadily and most profitably to me, until the entrance of Dr. and Mrs. Kye, when the conversation became more general and to me less interesting.

I had been devoting the greater part of my leisure time in making a present for Mr. Wilton, so, while they were talking, I went to my room

and brought it down; a pretty study cap, so nicely embroidered one could scarcely tell of what it was made. I laid it on the hall table, and when Mr. Wilton rose to go I accompanied him to the door, in quite a state of pleased expectation.

He had said good-by to the Doctor and Mrs. Kye in the parlor, when they kindly allowed us to have a moment alone in the hall. Giving him the little parcel I said :

"Will you accept a very small present from me? I have made it myself you were kind enough once to express a desire to have some of my own work for a keepsake."

"Thank you, Dora, I have more, I fear, to remember you by than you will ever know. May I have the brother's privilege again to-night?"

Without waiting for reply, he stooped down and kissed my lips. In that moment my heart was unveiled, and I discovered all a woman's love and devotion were smouldering there, and had been for some months, while I was so unconscious of their presence.

"Good-by," I said quietly, but did not return the warm pressure of his hand. I was glad to escape hurriedly to my own room; then the thought came that he was gone and had not said if ever he would come again. I laid my head down on the window-sill in the starlight and wept sad, sweet tears, sad when I thought that with my woman's weak heart I should carry this hidden pain, so newly discovered, alone through life.

Many a woman carries just such a pain for years hidden away in her heart, and yet she smiles, and hides her pain from every eye, until a kinder bridegroom comes and gives that tired heart rest in a quiet grave.





CHAPTER XII.

COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES.



AFTER this I went back to my school duties with a weary feeling, as though I had lost my interest in life. I was ashamed of myself for giving what had never been asked. I had promised once that I would give him a sister's affection; I thought I had, in its purity, done so, now I found I could never be sister, scarcely friend. My sense of honor would forbid me to longer indulge that most innocent intimacy that had so long existed between myself and Mr. Wilton. I tried to believe and com-

fort myself with thinking that God saw I needed suffering to purify my gross affections and desires, and that he had sent this pain, which might accomplish the desired end better than any other could do.

So through my tiresome duties my humbled heart made its moan ; and to hush its complainings and find relief I plunged with all my strength into work. I studied almost incessantly. When I walked with the pupils I took my book with me ; I thought out difficult problems as I took my food, and managed readily to keep abreast with all my classes, not fearing but that at the end of the year I should take my degree.

Doctor Kye noticed it all and said to me one day :

" You will kill yourself if you continue to work so hard. I shall be obliged to write to Mr. Wilton about the way you are doing."

" It will make no difference. I should die if I did not work."

Shortly after this I received a long letter from

Ashy. He proudly confessed to loving the best and sweetest girl in the world: "At least she is so to me, Dora," he said. "I dare say somebody else would think you far better, perhaps I might have done so if I had not found you heartless in that respect." He went on to say, "I cannot marry for a long time, and Marion has consented to wait. I suppose Mr. Wilton told you about her; she is the new teacher who came here a short time ago. I have been working hard lately. Squire Mounts has given me employment, and I am saving all I can to enable me to get to school. If you were rich I should ask for a loan of money; you once said that you would receive assistance from me, but we can neither help each other except with encouraging words."

"Ah, Mr. Ashy!" I thought joyously, "I am richer than you think." And seizing my pen I wrote, saying: my salary was good it had lately been increased, for which I had an uncomfortable fear that it was owing rather to Mr. Wilton's private generosity than to my employer's increased

appreciation of my merit. However that might be, it would enable me, very materially, to assist my friend towards the accomplishment of his desires, and I gladly availed myself of the chance to help him.

It was under a protest that Ashy accepted my help; but the little I was enabled to give, supplementing his own scant means, enabled him to enter school immediately.

The winter wore quickly away; I was kept so diligently at work I scarcely had a moment for unhealthy thought. But the anniversary exercises were a severe strain; I had my own classes to examine, and then take my place to be examined. I had scarcely a moment to myself, from morning till night.

Mr. Wilton was there; he was engaged with the board of examiners, and seemed to have a good deal of business to attend to, so that I generally was with him only long enough to exchange a word or two. His mother and sisters attended the closing exercises. I was honored

with an introduction; when I saw them, such stately, grand ladies, apparently so proud of the son and brother, I was ashamed to think I had presumed to call him my brother.

I read my graduation essay, and they said read it well. I was nearly reckless. I had gone at such high-pressure speed that even my strong nerves began to complain. I had, beside, my own peculiar heart-aches. Mr. Wilton had not seemed anxious to converse with me, and I fancied rather avoided me; I was tortured with the fear that he had been led to suspect my secret. It did not occur to me that it was I who shunned meeting him, and repelled by my manner any advances towards our accustomed intimacy.

Mingled with all my other anxieties was a real feminine trouble. I had been so lavish with my means that now, when I so much needed it, nearly every dollar had slipped out of my purse. The young ladies who were to appear with me on the stage were to be arrayed like the lilies of the field, exceeding Solomon in all his glory. I

looked over my scanty wardrobe with rueful eyes, but I tried to console myself by thinking a few more years to come it would make little difference whether I wore silk or cotton.

"I believe I shall wear this print," I said to one of the teachers who was sitting in my room, while I was pondering over the subject; "it is the lightest dress I have, and nobody will notice what I wear, or how I look, and if I fail, the contrast between the furnishing of mind and body won't be so marked."

I took the dress down to the laundry, and starched and ironed it myself; I would not trust it to a servant's care.

Mrs. Kye insisted on sending for her own hair-dresser to arrange my hair. He looked a little aghast, when I let down the heavy coils.

"I never worked with such hair before," he said, admiringly. "Why, I know ladies who would give a fortune for what I have in my hand."

He made it look very prettily. When I had

completed my toilet, I went into the professor's music room. He said :

"You look very superb, Miss Dora ; my Bertha will never be handsome like you."

"No one else will look at me through your spectacles, I fear," I laughingly replied.

My composition was very kindly received, more applause I could not have desired. "It must have been the cotton dress gained me their kind opinion," I said, in reply to Professor Auhlman's warm congratulations.

"Oh, no ! we nevare looked at de garments ; it was de wonderful voice did charm us, and it was so like you ; I tought all de time, it is herself is talking."

"Thank you, my good kind friend ; you cannot know how much I appreciate your encouraging words."

"I only tell you what is true," my kind-hearted friend replied, as he turned once more to his music.

I sat down in his easy-chair, resting my tired

head, while, with closed eyes, I listened as he wandered on through what seemed to me then to be labyrinths of harmony. No musician I had ever heard in all my life seemed to possess the soul of music to such a degree as Professor Auhlman. He knew my favorites, and, glad to please me, rendered them, one after another, in his most impassioned manner. He finished with Thalberg's "Home, Sweet Home," and turning round abruptly, said:

"Shall you go home now, Miss Dora?"

"I have no home, really, to go to, Professor, I am all alone in the world."

"Poor little girl! den you cannot understand dat piece I played last."

"Ah, yes! better, perhaps, than those who have a home and loved ones. I had these once, but I do not expect to again, until I find them in a world where I shall listen to diviner harmonies than were ever tuned on earth."



CHAPTER XIII.

REPENTANCE.



BEGAN to wonder next day what I should do during the vacation. I could return to N., and support myself, probably, by giving music lessons or by fancy work.

My heart led me there almost irresistibly; how could I resist the longing that had taken possession of me to visit my parents' graves, all that was mine of kindred and love upon earth? I wanted too to see the old home and the accustomed scenery, and faces of children, and to hear Mr. Wilton preach one of those grand, helpful sermons that used in other days to lift my heart

so far above the little anxieties and worries of life, my simple every day life.

"Oh, I must go, it is all the consolation I shall have for a whole year!" I exclaimed, passionately. And then the painful reflection came to me: "What am I becoming? Where am I drifting? Surely I must have lost the last remnant of the great blessed joy that I once possessed, if a short visit to the scenes of my childhood is the one pleasure of a whole year." I began to review the past year and asked myself what I had been doing, how living. Had God been in all my thoughts; had he been the center of my affections, the supreme, abiding joy of my heart as he once was? I could only despairingly answer: "He is not." The peace I had once enjoyed had given place to unhappiness, and unrest. My best affections were set on an earthly object; my highest ambition was to succeed selfishly. I saw that, in a half-hearted way, I had been endeavoring to keep the pure fires of divine love burning silently in my breast, hidden

from the world ; neither asking nor giving help ; my light hidden under the bushel so long that it had gone out, or so nearly so that only a feeble flicker remained.

"O God, have mercy upon me!" I cried agonizingly. "I feel myself helpless, wretched, lost. Thou only canst save me from myself, my only hope, my only help, is in thee."

I took my Bible, and as I turned leaf after leaf, my eyes caught at length these words of blessed comfort :

"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "There is no reservation here," I exclaimed, "not even for the backslider ; it is '*whosoever* ;' I am included there ; 'Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.'" For a long time I remained kneeling beside my narrow cot, praying for strength ; casting my all of fear, of doubt, of pain, upon him.

The tea-bell rang. All through the afternoon

I had heard my class-mates, and pupils, or the teachers, at my door, some of them coming to bid a good-by that might never be followed by a meeting on earth. It was the first time I had ever refused any of them admittance, no matter how busily I might be engaged; but now I felt a higher claim resting upon me.

I bathed my swollen face and went down to the dining-hall, when I was surprised to see so many vacant places at the table. I was grieved to have lost the last adieu from many to whom I was strongly attached.

"Dr. Kye said: "Where have you been all the afternoon, Miss Thurston? You have had a number of callers, and many of the young ladies went away disappointed at not seeing you."

"I will explain after tea," I replied, wondering who were my callers. He, however, passed several cards down the table to me, when I was surprised to see the names of Mr. Wilton, and his mother and sisters. Jennie Mounts had also honored me with a call; I was not aware that

she was in town; a short pang of jealousy shot through my heart, when I thought of her visiting the city with Mr. Wilton.

"Did they all come together?" I asked.

"Yes, but Mr. Wilton called twice afterward to see you."

"Did he leave any message?" I asked anxiously.

"I think not."

"Has he gone back to N.?"

"He told me he would leave early in the morning, but he is engaged this evening and will not be able to come again."

After tea, I went into the doctor's study and told him of my early conversion, of my succeeding failures, and of the great joy I had that afternoon again found.

"I want you to help me," I said, earnestly.

"I am very weak, my resolves are useless; I believe if I had some work to do for God I should be kept safer; I am willing to work, no matter how lowly it may be."

"I shall gladly help you if I can, Dora; we

must help each other. You have done me good already. I too have been careless and worldly, may God forgive me." He gave me his hand, grasping mine fervently.

"Shall I commence soon? I have lost so much time already I covet every moment now," I said.

"What are you going to do during the vacation?"

"I have not yet decided; I have been thinking of going home, but if I can get something better to do I will gladly do it."

"I can think of several ways in which you could be usefully employed; I will think them over to-night and we will decide in the morning which will be best."

I sat that night until a late hour with two or three of the young ladies. I felt strong then to commence my work, and why need I wait for to-morrow? "If I only look for it, I can find work every hour," I said to myself; "if not for others, I can be making my own life pure and lovely; if we were only what God would have

us be, our lives might be a constant psalm of thanksgiving.

"Life, my life, may be very beautiful and happy yet," I joyously thought, as my tired head pressed the pillow that night, "even if I am denied its great earthly sweetness. If God's benediction rests upon me, I shall know nothing of unrest, my heart shall have no aching void. He will be my all, my entire portion."

But I found even after this that stern lessons must be learned before this state of rest can be attained in all its fulness.

Inbred sin must be overcome; temptation from without trampled beneath the feet, doubts and fears scattered to the winds; but when the end has come, when God shall have completed his work in our hearts, and the unclouded light of Heaven dispels all the shadows that surround us on earth, then, in the clearer knowledge of that perfected state, we will not wish that one painful experience had been abated, a single defiance of doubt and difficulty been missed.



CHAPTER XIV.

HOLIDAYS.

THE next morning I awoke with a strange feeling of happiness to which I had long been a stranger. "What is it?" I wondered before my scattered faculties were fully gathered, and then the blessed experiences of the preceding day came thronging to my memory.

After breakfast, I accompanied the doctor into his study, with a large degree of expectancy.

After we were seated, he opened the conversation by saying:

"I have come to the conclusion that, if you can remain in the city during the hot weather, the most merciful work you can engage in will

be in visiting a few of the sick in hospitals.
You can go and come at pleasure.

"You can read to the patients, and write their letters, pray with them, and help them in many ways. I know of several families who will willingly supply you with flowers, particularly during their absence you will be able to get as many as you desire."

"Where will I stay?" I ventured to ask.

"The servants, some of them, at least, will remain here, and you can manage to exist some way, I dare say; it will, I fear, be very lonely for you, but the good you may do will make you contented."

"I shall not mind the loneliness, and will be very glad and thankful for the work. If I can't do anything else, I can read to them, and carry them flowers. But where shall I find books to read to them?"

"I will give you the key of the library, and you can make your own selection; but I think you will find the Bible the most suitable book.

When persons are alone among strangers, often face to face with death, it is God's word they desire most to hear."

"When will I begin my work?" was my next question.

"To-day, if you desire. I will take you to the nearest general hospital, and will take you likewise to those from whom you will obtain the flowers."

After a few days, I found myself comfortably settled at my work. At first I felt terribly, passing among the suffering and dying. I was a stranger to weak nerves, but some of the scenes tried my strength to the utmost.

There was one patient in whom from the very first I felt strongly interested. A fair, pure-faced boy, not more than fourteen, who had met with a serious accident. He had left a pleasant country home, and come up to the great, busy city to make his fortune. He was errand boy in a large, dry goods establishment, and had just begun to get accustomed to the bustle, as well

as loneliness of his new life, when he was brought into the hospital crushed and they feared dying.

I had only begun my visits a little while, when, as I entered one of the wards, with several bunches of flowers in my hand, I caught his eyes wistfully turned towards me. I generally selected some fragrant, simple flowers, such as the poor, who were the most largely represented in the hospital, were familiar with. I had among the rest a bunch of violets peeping through their green leaves, looking so fresh and cool amid the heat of that midsummer afternoon. I stepped to his bedside, and said as kindly as I could:

"Would you like some flowers, my little lad?"

"Oh! if you please. I should be so grateful."

"You may have your choice," and I held up the different bouquets.

"I would like the violets best, they look so like my home in the country."

His lips quivered, and I saw two great tears standing in his eyes. I put the flowers in a cup

at his side, where he could look at them, and breathe their perfume. I found his forehead very hot, so, while I bathed it, I talked to him of home and friends.

After we had conversed for some time, he said :

“ I have a sister that looks like you.”

“ Can't you think, then, that I am your sister ? I will try to be just as kind as if I were.” And then I asked : “ Would you like me to read you some from the Bible ? ”

“ Oh, so much ! if you would read the fourteenth chapter of John. Mother used so often to read that, and the following chapters, after father died.”

Every day I visited him ; sometimes writing, at his dictation, long loving letters to his mother ; sometimes telling him of the blessed Jesus, who sympathized with us in our sorrows, and who waits to receive us, when this life is done, into a world where there are no bruised bodies, or crushed limbs. Often, while I conversed with

him, he would lay with closed eyes, from under whose long, fringed lids I could see the tears quietly stealing. He would rarely make a direct reply to my occasional questionings, but when he did, I could find that he was thinking deeply of preparation for death and eternity.

It became doubtful at last if his leg could be spared. The doctors came, and looked anxiously at it, apparently dissatisfied with the way it was progressing. One morning, when I went in, he beckoned me to his bedside.

"Oh, Miss Dora, I have been watching so long for you to come! Don't you think, the doctors are going to cut my leg off! What will become of me? What will mother do now? I was going to earn money to pay for the farm."

"The Lord will provide, Willie, if we put our trust in him, and this may all be for your good. It is far better to lose your leg than to lose your soul. Maybe, if you had been prosperous, you might have lost that, at last."

"Oh, I am afraid I shall lose both! God can-

not love me, or he wouldn't take away my health and make me a cripple, useless for life."

"He afflicts, very often, those whom he loves. Every son whom he receives, he chastens."

"Did he ever afflict you?" he asked, with astonished gaze.

"Yes, in a way that I should have thought far greater than the losing my right hand, or right foot. We must learn to trust God. I was a long time learning this, but I believe I have come to do so now, and what once seemed a burden too heavy for me to carry through life, I have come to find the means of procuring me my greatest earthly good."

"Will you stay with me, when the doctors come? I won't mind it so much if you are here. I wish you to pray for me while it's being done." He looked at me eagerly, almost imploringly, and then burst into tears.

"I will come and remain with you through the operation, if I can control my feelings; but you will be unconscious."

"I want you here when I come to myself, it will be such a comfort to see your face then."

I gave him my promise then, certainly to remain with him all the time, if the doctors permitted.

That afternoon the operation was to be performed, after the day began to grow cooler. I did not go home to dinner; it was a long distance away in the suburbs, and Willie was unwilling for me to leave him for an instant. I stepped into a restaurant, took a light dinner, and returned immediately. All through the dreary afternoon, I sat with his hand in mine, his patient, frightened face turned towards mine constantly.

"Is it nearly four o'clock yet?" he would ask, with a half-suppressed sob.

Many times I was obliged to say "no," but at last the moment came, and with it the surgeon, and his assistants. The attendants carried him to the room where the operation was to be performed, when the preparations were completed.

I had stood trial during some painful scenes, but had never witnessed anything so serious as this.

"Will you be able to remain?" Dr. Dowse asked.

"I shall make the attempt for Willie's sake," I replied.

"You look very pale, shall I get you a glass of brandy?"

"Thank you, I do not wish anything," I replied.

Pretty soon the little patient fellow was unconscious under the influence of ether, and the surgeon's knife was entering the tender flesh. I had sat with my back to the operators, but, when I heard the grating of the saw against the bone, a momentary dimness passed, like a cloudy film, over my eyes, and I felt myself surging for an instant, but a quick, gasping moan, as if of pain, from the boy, recalled my wandering senses. Soon all was done and he was laid upon his bed. I sat with him until late in the evening.

"You will do him more good than I can," Dr.

Dowse, the surgeon, said to me when he heard Willie faintly urging me not to leave him. "If you will remain until I have completed my rounds, I will take you home."

"I shall stay with pleasure, but shall not need to trouble you to go so far. I am not afraid to go alone," I said, gratefully.

I remained until the late twilight had nearly faded from the sky. As I sat there thinking, — my poor boy was too weak to talk, or to listen to reading either, — pondering over the new work that had come to me, I wondered if I might not be more useful here than in the school-room. "If I were only rich," I murmured softly, "I should not hesitate a moment." My peculiar training never fitted me to be a teacher; I liked my liberty too well; beside, I had rather be helping the poor and suffering who have so few to care for them, it was more like missionary work.

I thought sadly of Willie longing to see his mother, and her heart yearning for a glimpse of

her only son. Suddenly, like an inspiration, the thought occurred: Could I not beg the necessary sum of money from some of my friends, to enable her to come? If anything would bring back the rapidly failing health of the patient boy, surely, it would be his mother's presence and care.

While I was pondering deeply over my newly planned scheme, Dr. Dowse came for me. I had forgotten his promise and felt reluctant to take him so far, when I knew he must be wearied with the day's duties.

"I shall feel distressed at having you go so far," I said ruefully. "I am perfectly acquainted with the way, and have no fear of the darkness."

"I shall certainly not allow you to do so much for my patients, and then suffer you to walk such a distance, after night, when I have a carriage at the door."

I was not sorry, after all, for the drive, out through the cool evening air, was certainly very enjoyable. I was exhausted with watching and

anxiety, and the easy motion of the carriage was grateful to my tired limbs.

I found the doctor a very pleasant companion, and the drive seemed so short I was surprised when I saw the great gloomy walls of my habitation gleaming in the bright moonlight.

"It is a very long walk for you, every day," he remarked, as we drew up at the door. "You should, at least, ride on your return home."

"I am so accustomed to walking I think nothing of it."

"May I ask if you shall continue your welcome visits much longer?"

"Not after the holidays, I shall resume teaching then."

"Is this the way you are spending your holidays?"

"Yes, and I find it a very happy way. I like to be doing something, if it is ever so small, to help others."

After a short pause, he said:

"I wish there were more of your mind in our

city. There is so much to be done, and so few to work."

Before I retired that night, I wrote to Dr. Kye and Mr. Wilton, stating Willie's case, his desire to see his mother, indeed, their mutual desire to be together, and begged a small sum from each, which I would supplement by a few applications to persons whom I knew in the city. In a few days I received answers to my appeals; each of the letters contained a generous sum, quite sufficient to defray all expenses, and leave still a small balance, in case of emergency.





CHAPTER XV.

WILLIE'S DEATH.



WILLIE did not appear to do so well as the doctors wished. He was feverish, and restless, and very often delirious; my heart used to ache as I heard him calling piteously for his mother. I neglected every one else to wait on him. I still gathered the flowers and kept the vases supplied, and took every day to some of them an illustrated paper or book to amuse the period of tiresome waiting. One young man, Alick Jones, in whom I had been, previously to Willie's coming, very much interested, said to me one morning as I filled his cup with fresh flowers:

"You have forgotten all about us in this ward you don't know how we miss you."

"You would gladly excuse me if you knew how much more I am needed elsewhere; besides, you are getting well, now."

"I should get well faster," he said, "if I could hear you read the Bible every day."

"You *shall* hear me then; I must not neglect anyone who wishes to hear that blessed book read."

The doctor thought I had better not tell Willie his mother was coming, until the day before we expected her. I could hardly keep my secret; he seemed to be yearning so for a glimpse of her loving face. I said to him a few days before she came: "Keep up your courage, you may see her sooner than you expect. I hope to see her coming in some fine morning soon."

He looked eagerly at me for a moment and then his countenance fell.

"I know they are not able to get the money," he murmured, piteously. "Oh! must I die and never see my mother again?"

"You are not going to die, darling," I said, more perhaps as a question than an assertion.

"I think I must die soon."

"Why do you think so?" I asked, tearfully.

He replied, more as if talking to himself:

"He said we might come; he died for us."

"What do you say, Willie?"

"Christ, the Lord Christ, died for me; you have told me so."

"Yes, dear; and he loves you better than we can do, and I trust he will soon make you well again."

"I should be able to walk in heaven, wouldn't I?" he asked. I could still the rising in my heart no longer, and laying my head beside his on the pillow, I burst into tears.

"Should you be sorry if I died?" he gently asked.

"O Willie, you must live for all our sakes."

"Not if Jesus wants me in Heaven. He knows how hard it would be for me on earth; Hannah and the others will care for mother."

While we were talking, Dr. Dowse came to the bedside; I did not hear his footsteps and was startled by feeling a hand rest on my head for an instant.

"What is the matter, brave heart?" he asked.

I looked up, grieved to think I should seem so poor a nurse. "Willie thinks he is going to die," I said, suppressing a sob.

"And you are going to help him." His voice was slightly reproachful.

"Forgive me, Doctor, but I shall do better for the future. You cannot know how I have learned to love him."

He looked at me a little curiously, I thought, and then said:

"It is no wonder *he* loves you."

The next morning I was early at my post; while the doctor went to the depot for Mrs. May. I found Willie looking weaker than he had yet done; my heart sank. "I fear his mother has only come to see him die," I thought,

as I looked at his poor pinched face and bright eyes.

When he saw me, he exclaimed: "Oh! I had such a lovely dream last night; I thought mother came and staid with me for a while, and then I went away into a beautiful field, where there was a river flowing, and on its banks flowers were growing, far sweeter than those you bring us, while music seemed floating all around me. Oh! I was so happy! I thought it must be Heaven."

"Perhaps it was, dear; do you think, if I told you something in your dream might come true to-day, you could bear it?"

His face flushed with sudden excitement, "Is my mother coming?" he cried.

"Yes, Willia, I think you will see her in a little while."

"When?" and his voice sank to a whisper.

"Perhaps to-day, but you must be brave."

He turned so pale I feared he would faint; clasping his thin little hands and raising his eyes, he said reverently:

"I thank thee, blessed Saviour, for thy goodness."

I heard the doctor's footstep at the door; I went to open it, and there behind our kind friend I saw a timid, gentle-looking woman with a face so eagerly anxious I instantly felt it was Willie's mother. I put my arms about her neck, feeling that she needed sympathy.

"Your dear boy knows you are coming."

The doctor held the door open for her to pass through; we had removed him into a little room by himself. When Doctor Dowse found that I had begged money to bring Mrs. May, he said to me: "I shall do my part also," and so obtained for him extra accommodation.

The door closed on the widow and her son and turning to my companion I saw, through my own tear-blurred eyes, that his own were moist.

For a few days Willie seemed to rally, and we, thought, his mother and I, that he would certainly recover.

I had more leisure now for my other friends

in the hospital, and received many a pleasant greeting from Alick Jones, who had complained of former neglect.

One morning, I was a little later than usual; I had not been feeling well and the day was very unfavorable, raining and blowing with low, leaden skies, and I thought, that I should have a long day for writing my letters, of which there were a number due.

While I was hesitating, I heard the door-bell ring; my first thought was that possibly Mr. Wilton had come; he had written me that he would be in town shortly; but my pleasant expectation was to be disappointed. Through the half-closed study door, I heard Dr. Dowse inquiring for me; in a moment I was in the hall to receive him. Immediately after the usual greeting, he said: "Will you come with me, Willie is very anxious to see you?"

"Is he worse?" I asked, anxiously.

"Yes, he is sinking very fast. But you must not grieve, my dear Miss Thurston, we know it

will be well with him; you should be thankful for that."

I could scarcely be thankful for anything just then. I had become so strongly attached to the dear, patient boy that it seemed I could not give him up.

I was soon ready to accompany the doctor; with rare thoughtfulness he forbore to speak, but urged the horse to his utmost speed. As we entered the building I said:

"Will he last long?"

"Possibly until noon."

"So soon?" I whispered, and it was so, for at noon he left us; but the summons came gently, for we scarcely knew when the spirit winged its flight to the paradise of God. I took Mrs. May home with me, together with the poor maimed body of her darling child.

"I must take him home," she said, with tearless eyes and stricken face, "I shall have his grave beside his father's."

She had hitherto refused my offer to share my

home with her; she did not leave Willie day or night. In the early morning of the succeeding day Dr. Dowse came to drive her to the station; as she bade me good-by tears, of gratitude stood in her eyes.

"I can only pray for you," she said: "that I shall do so long as I live. May God reward you."

"He has given me already all the reward I desire," I replied, at the same time placing in her hand the remainder of the funds entrusted to my care for her and Willie, and then I kissed her good-by, just as the carriage was starting. On his return from the station, Dr. Dowse called; he said: "I thought a drive would do you good; will you allow me the pleasure of giving you one?"

I think he seemed fearful lest I might refuse. Without a moment's hesitation, I said:

"I shall be very grateful, and will be ready in a moment."

He looked so gratified that I went to my

room feeling glad that I could confer a pleasure so easily.

A moment after, I mentally shook myself as I said : " You proud, foolish creature, to think any one should care for your company ; you, who never had a lover in your life ; " and then I sighed, just a little sigh, but I could not dare to complain about anything now.




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CHAPTER XVI.

DOCTOR DOWSE.

N a few days Dr. Kye and his family returned, and in less than a fortnight our school duties were to be resumed. When Mrs. Kye witnessed my weariness after returning at night from a day spent at the hospital, she exclaimed loudly against a continuance of such exhaustive labor, especially as the school duties would so soon be pressing upon me.

"You are unjust to yourself in assuming to such an extent the burdens of others, and if you won't think of yourself, I must think for you," she said in her determined way a morning or

two after their arrival, as I was preparing to leave for the hospital.

"You will at least let me go once more to say good-by?" I asked laughingly.

"Well, I suppose you must be allowed that privilege, but remember that must be all."

I felt a little sadly at the thought of ceasing my visits to my sick friends, for, without any undue elevation of mind, I knew that they would miss me.

When I was telling them that day that I must leave them very soon, probably for good, in the midst of our leave-taking, Dr. Dowse came in.

"What is the matter here, that you look so sober?" he inquired.

"Matter enough," my young Alick replied, "we are losing the sunshine of the house."

"How so?" As the doctor spoke, he glanced laughingly towards me. "That must be you Miss Thurston."

"If so, there must be very shadowy sunshine

here, I feel more like a cloud just now, and you will see the drops pretty soon if I don't leave."

I started for the door, the doctor following me.

"You didn't mean that we shall not see you here again?" he asked.

"Our school commences shortly and they think I must take a few days first of entire rest, but I shall try to come sometimes."

"Shall I drive you home?" he asked.

"I shall be very glad to have one more drive with Gypsey," I replied.

"I hope you may have a great many more."

"Thank you, I should enjoy it a great deal more than Gypsey, I dare say."

"Not half so much as Gypsey's master, I fear."

I noticed, as he spoke, the same expression flit across his face that I saw when he found me that day in tears at Willie's bedside. I did not make any reply, but for an instant wished it were Mr. Wilton at my side, instead of Dr.

Dowse. His next question startled me; I need not add that it gave me pain. He said gently:

"May I hope some day to have the right to keep you by my side until death parts us, Dora?"

Was he asking me to marry him, I wondered? I looked up into his face; it was all aglow, that still, self-contained face with some deep emotion. He must have seen a look of surprise in my upturned face, he spoke eagerly:

"You understand my meaning? I want you for my wife. You can never know how I have learned to love you."

"Oh!" That was all I could say, but he fully understood, instantly, what that little ejaculative implied.

"I have surprised you," he said hurriedly; "I might have known; can you not learn to love me? I will be willing to wait, willing to take you with ever so small a share of your heart, darling."

"Oh, my dear, best friend, I am so sorry, but

I love another; I cannot help telling you that which I had thought no one would ever know."

"Is that love not returned?"

"Only the love of a brother is given." I felt my cheeks crimson under his gaze.

"How can he help loving you as a man only once in a life-time loves a woman?" There was a suppressed passion in his voice that startled me. He did not speak again but urged his horse to her utmost speed. As I sat at his side and thought of the new life I had but just refused—a life that might have been so full of love and usefulness, with a friend and husband whom scores of girls, as rich and beautiful as I was poor and plain, would gladly have accepted. I wondered if I was doing right, had I done right? Although my heart was aching for rest and affection I was glad I had said no, or, at least, what was its equivalent. I had long ago resolved that, so far as I was able, I should be true and honest in my intercourse with everyone, how much more so in such a case as this; but, never-

theless, the wish did trouble me somewhat, as I sat by his side, that I could have honorably accepted his hand and heart; a gift so great for one like him to give me.

Garrulous nurse at the hospital had informed me of his wealth, and, what with persons of their class is so important, his aristocratic connections. How could I then doubt the reality of his affection in asking me, a humble, penniless girl, to share his home and fortune?

When we were saying good-by at the door, as I stood with my hand in his I said, possibly with a quiver in my voice:

"I want you for my friend, will you let me love you as such?"

"I shall be glad to have you think of me in any way," he said as he wrung my hand.

After I had watched him out of sight, I thought with a pang. "Is this the joy of having lovers, the pleasure of triumph I have heard the girls talk so much about? Oh! it is sadder far than Willie's death," I murmured. "What a

dreary thing life is! I see there is nothing for me but Heaven and the rest from every sorrow that I shall find there." In the seclusion of my own room I asked myself: "Could he love me as I too love another, and would the burden of that unrequited love give him the same unrest of soul that I endure? If it were not a sin I would almost rather have married him to save so noble a heart from such suffering as I have experienced."

I passed a sleepless night; like a tiresome refrain the question would haunt me. Was it impossible for two to think of each other as dearly cherished friends without one of them overstepping the bounds of friendship, and encroaching on that fairer field that lies within every other of human affection? I could see plainly where I had, in the past, erred. I should have looked more to my own sex for companionship, but, alas! with the sterner sex I had found more nobleness of character, and could I be blamed for my preference? I determined then to look anxiously

among the fresh arrivals at the opening of the school for a friend, and one not likely to spoil it all someday by falling in love and marrying.

The next morning, when I met Dr. Kye at breakfast, my pale face and jaded look alarmed him. "How thoughtless I have been to allow you to wear yourself out," he exclaimed. "You shall have your holiday, too. How would you like to go to N.?"

I thought, "Would the tired child lost in the darkness be glad of its mother's embrace? I quietly answered; "It is impossible for me to go anywhere now."

"Why so?" he asked, abruptly.

I blushed painfully. Should I confess to my poverty? I had not a dollar left; he must have guessed the cause of my embarrassment.

"You cannot have expended much on your wardrobe; I cannot discover even a new ribbon," he said, playfully. I did not make him any reply. "I am indebted to you for several favors," he said, kindly, "and I can remain so no longer."

I wondered at the time what he could mean, but had nearly forgotten all about it. At twilight, that same evening, I went to sit for an hour or two with Mrs. Kye, and to have a romp with Frank and Lulu. They were frolicsome children and I enjoyed a half hour's fun with them now and then.

While we were in the midst of a noisy game we heard the doctor's footsteps at the door, his entrance was generally the signal for a cessation of the game, whatever it might be. When he saw me he handed me a paper; in the deepening twilight I was obliged to carry it to the window to discover its contents. How my heart jumped when I saw that it was a pass to and fro to N.

"O Doctor! how shall I thank you?" I joyfully exclaimed.

"By taking an installment on your salary," he replied, handing me my first quarter's allowance for the coming year.

"The next question now is, how I shall ever repay you for all that you have done for me, es-

pecially this last act of kindness. I suppose Mr. Wilton has told you how troublesomely independent I am?"

"Yes, and he has told me so many things about you I have been surprised that he has not come to claim such a treasure for his own."

I was glad the darkness concealed my crimson face. It was not long until I was safe in my own room trying to measure the extent of my coming happiness, and trying also to plan for the few days among the scenes and friends of my childhood so that every moment might be yielding its harvest of joy.

The pleasure of going to my home was greatly heightened by the unexpected prepayment of salary. I was glad to be able to show those who had befriended me that I was not forgetful of their former acts of benevolence, and although the gifts were pitifully small, I knew those for whom they were intended would appreciate them, not for their intrinsic value, but for the grateful spirit which prompted them. I resolved to take

the noon train of the following day for N., and would, even then, have sufficient time after its arrival, to make my way to Mrs. Dutton's before nightfall. Among all the kind friends who, for my parent's sake, I knew would gladly welcome me for a week's stay, I felt more strongly drawn towards Mrs. Dutton's beaming fireside than any, although the question of sleeping accommodations perplexed me somewhat.

I was awake the next morning at dawn, and had my valise packed, and room set in order, before the rising bell sounded through the silent building. How happy and light my heart felt as I went softly singing about my room that early morning; over and over I asked myself if it could be true, that I should see the dear home before I lay on the pillow that night. But I was not sure, just then, of having a pillow; I might be obliged to content myself with a rocking-chair in Mrs. Dutton's kitchen.

Mrs. Kye noticed my poor appetite at breakfast, which drew the doctor's attention, and I was

obliged to sustain myself against a good deal of good-natured raillery; I could, however, that day, have submitted patiently to anything they might have said; it would have been next to impossible to have ruffled my serenity.



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CHAPTER XVII.

HOME AGAIN.



soon completed all the purchases my means would allow, and was enabled to to pay a flying visit to my hospital friends. I feared Dr. Dowse would impute a long absence to what he had said the day before, and I honored him too highly to wound his feelings unnecessarily. I met him at the door, as I was leaving. I saw a flush come over his face at sight of me, for an instant, and then it was gone.

"I have come to say good-by. I am going to make a visit to N., and I was afraid you would wonder at my absence."

"I am grateful to you for your thoughtfulness. I should have been pained to think I had driven you from here."

"I would only come all the sooner," I said eagerly. "I look upon you now as one of my best friends."

"I shall be glad to do all for you that the nearest friend can do," he said a little sadly I thought, then in a lighter tone he asked if he might drive me home.

I was grateful for his offer, for I was really fatigued, and forgetting for the time that it was his busiest part of the day, I stepped gladly into the easy carriage, and soon found myself at home.

After an early dinner I drove to the station. I was in quite a fever of anxiety, lest the train should leave me. As it was I had a good half hour to wait; but the time soon passed, and I

found myself flying along towards the dearest spot on earth to me.

When we reached the station, I found Mr. Wilton waiting with his carriage, to take me to the parsonage. He came in with such a pleased look on his face I could not hide the joy I felt for a few minutes. The warmth of his welcome scarcely exceeded the pleasure I manifested at seeing him. He said, while we were waiting for the crowd to leave :

"I have been waiting here these two hours for you. I could not rest until I came here, and then I was equally impatient for the arrival of the train."

"How did you know I was coming?" I asked wonderingly. "I thought to take my friends by surprise."

"A little bird whispered it to me," he replied with a smile.

"I think it was a very large bird, whose wings won't have plumed for some time to come; the same bird, I fancy, who bought me the ticket to

come here."

"Then it was not through your own free will that you came?"

"Yes, it was. If my will could have brought me, I should have been here long ago, but you know that won't pay one's passage."

I sighed softly as I thought how nearly I had come to losing this great pleasure. He looked at me closely for a moment; I could see that he took in at a glance my plain attire. It did not trouble me to acknowledge my poverty to him; he knew me too well to think that I did it for effect.

"You should not rob yourself, Dora," he said gently; "but I fear you spare too much for others, and care too little for yourself."

"Do you think with our natures there is any danger of that?" I asked thoughtfully. "My fault has always been to think of self first, and last, too," I added after a moment's pause.

"It is better to err as I know you are doing, Dora, but I do not like to think of you being de-

prived of anything that would add to your comfort and happiness."

"Well, I am so happy to-night that I feel as rich as Croesus."

For a while I could scarcely refrain from exhibiting the exuberance of my delight in some childish way. I enjoyed the drive along the accustomed streets so supremely that I had forgotten to tell Mr. Wilton that I wished to go direct to Mrs. Dutton's, until the horse was entering the carriage-drive leading to the parsonage.

"Shall I alight here, or will you take me to Mrs. Dutton's?" I asked, somewhat uneasily.

"You do not think of staying there?"

"It is nearest home, and I had rather go there than stay at any other place."

"I think Mrs. Dutton's sleeping apartments are already in an overcrowded state." He gave me an amused look as he spoke.

"Oh, an easy-chair will be sufficient for me, until I get some better arrangement made," I eagerly answered.

"I shall not allow my little sister to do anything like that, when we have half a dozen unoccupied sleeping rooms."

I only wondered what Mrs. Mounts and Jennie would say to such a proceeding. While I hesitated, he said:

"We are expecting you here."

My heart stood still for an instant. "Are you married, Mr. Wilton?" My voice sounded strangely even to myself.

"Would you congratulate me if I were married, Dora?"

For an instant a film came over my eyes, but I held out my hand; he was standing beside the carriage, waiting to lift me out; I was able to murmur half audibly, "I hope you will be happy."

Just then, I saw a lady within the door, and a pleasant voice asked:

"Have you come, Philip?"

"Yes, we are here." He stood ready to lift me from the carriage.

"Is that your wife, Mr. Wilton?" I looked at him, I did not know my face was so ghastly.

"What is the matter, Dora, are you sick?" he asked hurriedly.

"I was able to murmur an almost incoherent 'no.' Like a dagger, the question presented itself to my mind:

"Can that woman love him as I have done? May God forgive me, as I do, now!"

"Should you be sorry if I were married, Dora?"

Someway, from his manner of speaking, my mind felt relieved.

"I should wish always, to see you happy," was my rather unsatisfactory reply to his question.

"Ah, well, my child, you need not fear losing your brother. I am not married, and do not know that I shall ever be."

Then he introduced me to the pleasant-voiced lady. How groundless my fear and pain. It was only his sister! Her greeting was so kindly her manner so cordial, that I felt instantly at

ease in her presence. She conducted me, herself, to my room, which I found so comfortable, and cheery, the wish unbidden came that I could stay in it forever, or rather claim it for my own.

When I glanced at my companion's rich evening dress, and contrasted it with my own shabby costume, I was tempted to wish myself beside Mrs. Dutton's homely fireside. But mortified vanity, unbecoming habiliments and all, I felt that I would still prefer having my earnings invested as they were than to have them expended in fine clothes. I consoled myself with the thought that ten years hence it would not matter much how I was then habited, while the little I had been enabled to expend for others might still be benefiting some one. While I was arranging my hair, Miss Wilton said:

"I am so glad to have you here, I get so lonely in my brother's absence."

"You have plenty of books and music," I remarked.

"Ah, well, one needs something beside books for company. I had rather have you sitting near me than the presence of a hundred musty folios."

"Thank you very much," I laughingly replied, "I wish I could gratify your desire. It is so delightful to be here, I can scarcely realize that I am once more at home."

"Why did you not come home then, directly, when school was done?"

I thought I might as well plainly confess to my lack of means, so I frankly answered her question.

"I had not at the time sufficient money to pay my fare, without depriving myself of a few of the necessities of life; and beside, I wished to be doing something for those who need our help. I was enabled to see how selfishly I had been living, and I hoped to atone for the past."

"And you remained in the city through all the heat, without a breath of fresh, pure air," she said pityingly.

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"But I was needed there the most. People leave the city just when the sick need care the most. I am young and strong, and can endure hardship, such slight hardships as I have as yet had to meet."

"I should believe that, together with teaching all the year, you had very much more than your share."

"Oh! it was pleasure compared with what thousands in that one city have to bear. I did not know until recently that there was so much misery in the world, and it does one good to find how much more others suffer."

"You must be very happy living such an unselfish life," she said wistfully.

"I have scarcely begun to live that life yet. Here I have left duties of my own that others will be obliged to perform, merely for my own pleasure. I do not know but that I am more selfish than most persons, but I cannot regret that I am here. It is compensation, a hundred fold, for all I have endeavored to do for others."

The tea-bell rang then, interrupting our farther conversation. When we went down-stairs, I found Mrs. Green waiting to speak with me. She expressed so much pleasure at seeing me, I was led to wonder if she would be willing again to endure the excruciating sounds I used to make at the piano.

I spent such a happy evening, the pleasantest I had known for months. I soon forgot my plain attire, both Mr. Wilton and his sister had such a happy art of making one feel so perfectly at home with one's self and all the world.

He seemed gratified with the progress I had made in music. I had got so now I could translate those mysteries of sound much more melodiously than when I used to give poor Mrs. Green the noises in her head.

We retired late. I had enjoyed the evening so supremely I was incredulous, when Mr. Wilton said:

"It is nearly midnight. We have been very forgetful of Dora's weariness."

"I had forgotten it myself," I answered.

At prayers that evening, it was a psalm of thanksgiving Mr. Wilton read, and as I leaned my head back on my easy-chair, I thought, with closed eyes but rejoicing heart, what a thanksgiving my whole life should be. I felt that God was giving me sunshine after the storm-cloud, just as it was needed. I believed then that I should never again yield to despairing thoughts, after the way in which he had led me. "How I must ever walk in the light," I only murmured, "even until I reach the unclouded light of the hereafter, when we shall know even as also we are known." And then, there came a pain to my heart, so sharp in its bitterness that the tears stole down under the tightly-closed lashes. Sadly I recollected that it was not thus I was known in this home.

When Mr. Wilton had finished reading the psalm, and said in those full rich tones that always thrilled my heart so strangely, "Let us pray," I crouched beside my chair, glad to be

able to conceal the emotion I could not control. As he prayed, asking for grace to enable us to to live aright, for strength to overcome the world and our own hearts, and that we might live earnest, holy lives, my heart joined in a fervent amen, while soon I felt the peace entering my soul that always follows believing prayer. When we arose from our knees, I had regained my composure, and could say good-night as calmly as if there were no need of hiding a thought from either of them.





CHAPTER XVIII. .

OLD FRIENDS.

THE next morning I was awake at an early hour, anticipating a world of pleasure for that day. The sun was shining brightly, and through my open window the fragrance of a thousand blossoms was pouring in a dewy sweetness.

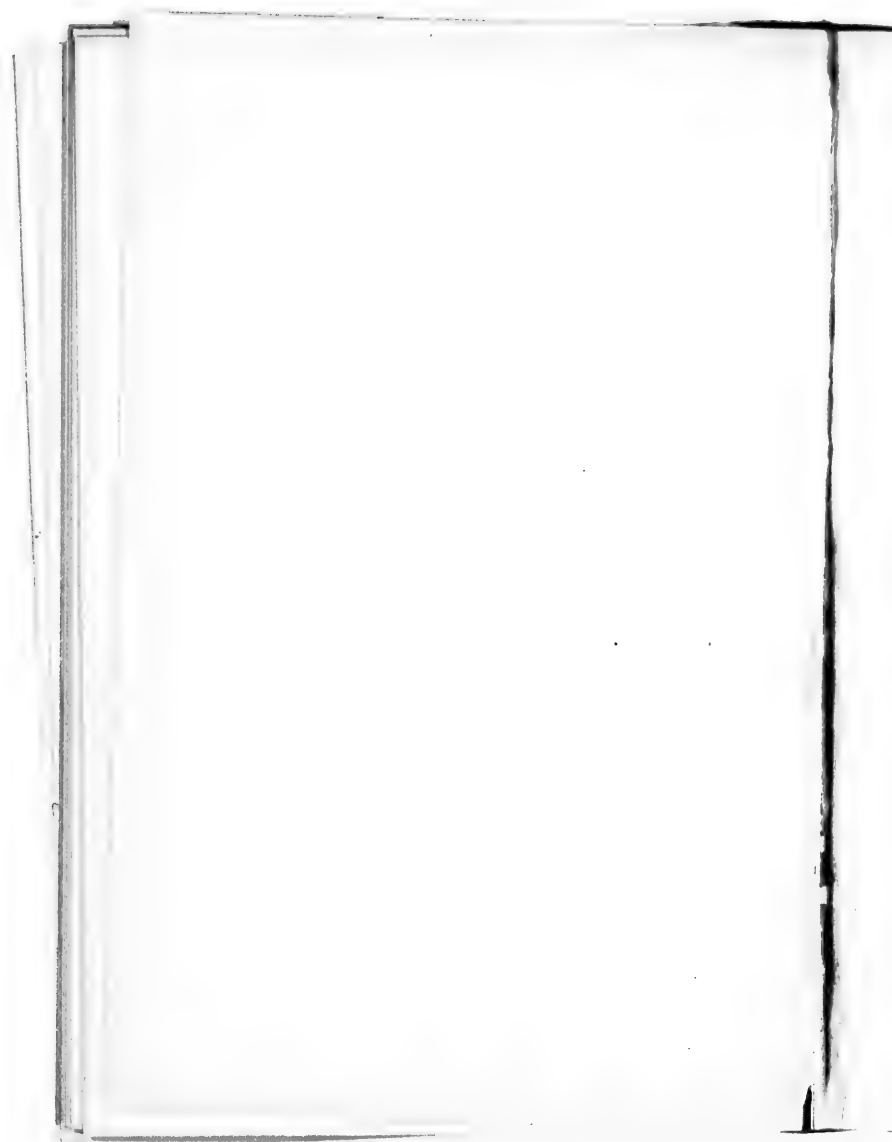
As I gazed from my window through the clustering trees that adorned the grounds, I could gain glimpses of the surrounding landscape. It seemed to me then that if I could only live in that lovely spot I should have nothing left to wish for; and then I thought, if I only possessed

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"If I could only live in that lovely spot."
Page 166.



that peace that passeth understanding in all its fullness, I could be happy anywhere on earth or in any society. I believe I was that morning standing near the confines of that blessed border land which Bunyan describes, where the birds are always singing in the sunshine, and the river of life is sparkling in unclouded light, while, just a little way beyond, lies the city of the redeemed.

My heart was overflowing with thankfulness to the Father who loved me, and whose benediction was resting upon me, and, as I glanced up through the rustling leaves that only partially concealed the blue heavens beyond, I realized that I might, with those I loved, in a little while be gathered there safe forever.

"How happy are the sainted dead!" I exclaimed half aloud, when a voice within me seemed to whisper that I should be happy too. The same grace that enabled them to triumph was freely offered to me, while in addition God had called me to be a co-worker in the world's

ripening harvest field. Already I had taken, with feeble, trembling hand, the sickle and stood amid the waving grain.

"Am I wearied of the work?" I asked myself.

"Not wearied, no, anxious, doubly anxious to endure, even through the noonday heat, on to the eventime, when God might say, even to me, weak, and tempted though I might be, 'Well done, faithful servant.'"

Whether it was the glorious morning-time, with the bird going wild with ecstasy of song, and the balmy air redolent with the fragrance of the summer blossoms, together with nature's early matinals, no discords anywhere, the most distinct sounds I could hear being the distant melody of tinkling bells on patient cows as they wandered through the pastures' richness, whether it were these combined that thrilled me so I cannot tell, but, it may be, when we hold deepest communion with his fairest works that God most plainly speaks with us. It was amid the

overwhelming grandeur of Sinai that Moses held highest intercourse with Jehovah.

It was not so much prayer as praise I mingled with that morning's sacrifice which I offered kneeling in the flewy air as it floated through my open window; for weeks the hallowed influence of that morning's communion continued with me.

I heard the bell at last, and supposing it the summons to breakfast I went down to join my friends, feeling less anxiety about my costume than on the preceding evening. Mrs. Green met me at the foot of the stairs with a beautiful rose, the diamond drops still clinging to it. I fastened it among the braids of my hair and went out on the veranda to wait for breakfast. I had mistaken the rising bell for the call to breakfast. It was not long before Mr. Wilton came in search of me, and Mrs. Green soon after summoned us to the smoking coffee, hot rolls, and other delicacies for which she was so famous. I was actually ashamed of my appetite, and con-

cluded for the future to beg a luncheon from Mrs. Green before coming to table. "Ah, me!" my next thought was, "I am getting demoralized altogether, but I won't mar the blessedness of my morning's communion with despairing thoughts."

After prayers Miss Wilton asked her brother his plans for the day's recreation. He turned to me, and said: "What would you like, Dora? we shall be entirely at your disposal for a week."

"You must not say that," I replied, while I blushed painfully at the thought of having so much attention paid to my insignificant self. "I shall only be satisfied remaining here, by not interrupting your arrangements at all."

"Mrs. Dutton must be visited before any of your other friends, I presume," Mr. Wilton said playfully.

"My mind leads me more strongly in that direction than any other," I replied.

Miss Wilton said very decidedly: "You must stay away a very little while then, for I intend keeping you here most of the time."

"You did not know she fell in love with you at the examination, Dora?"

"It must have been on account of my cotton dress," I laughed lightly to hide my pleasure at knowing she liked me.

"It could not have been with yourself, I suppose. Ah! Dora, my child, you will never learn your actual worth, I fear." He shook his head as though my case were desperate.

I went first that morning to see Mrs. Dutton. That good woman had heard of my arrival, and a general scrubbing of chairs, and floors, and faces, had ensued.

The children were arranged against the kitchen wall in high-backed chairs. Mr. Dutton was in the house when I went in; I found him poring over one of his few books; whether he was searching for another name or not I could not tell. By the row of olive plants against the wall I thought the poor man had contributed his quota to the country's population.

In an unusually long speech for him to make

he welcomed me home, at the same time making some flattering remark about the way they all had missed me. I could not help thinking Mrs. Dutton had prompted the speech in some recent curtain lecture. However that may be, she supplemented his few remarks in a most voluble manner, expressing both for herself and children their gladness at seeing me.

To turn the current of her remarks, I expressed my astonishment at the change they had all undergone, from Clementine, down to the latest nestling on her mother's knee — my own little namesake. They were beginning to grow tremulous on their high-backed chairs, such long quiet being contrary to their custom, so, after I had shaken hands all around, and kissed each one of them, their mother released them from their high positions.

"Where is Ashy?" was my first inquiry.

"Him gone to meet 'oo," piped little Seraphina.

"Just hear the darling," her mother raptur-

ously exclaimed, as she lifted the little prattler to a seat on her voluminous lap. In a few minutes Ashy came in. We had missed each other on the way. I was surprised to see how he had improved.

"You have grown to be a real fine-looking man, Ashy."

"I am scarcely a man yet, but hope to be someday, Dora."

"He is beginning manly business anyway. I expect to see him at the head of a family before long." As his mother spoke I detected a flush, not exactly of pleasure, I thought, pass over his face.

"It is what we must all come to, I suppose." I turned around as I heard Axy's voice, and found him the same stout, broad-shouldered boy I had left a year ago.

As I sat chatting with Mrs. Dutton, I wondered how I could so soon have forgotten how straitened were her accommodations. I soon asked for the key of the house I was so anxious

to revisit; the old home held far stronger attractions than Mrs. Dutton's crowded house. Wishing to have a little while to myself first, and fearing that Ashy would wish to accompany me, I said as I was leaving: "Will you come up by and by, I have a good deal I want to say to you?"

He readily promised. As I walked up the now grass-covered lane, how many memories were revived. There was the rustic seat Ashy had rudely built for me, where I used to watch for the children with Marco lying at my feet, in those long ago days of childhood. Marco had been dead years and years; how distinctly I recollected the morning he died! What a wretched day it was to us, and with what a full heart I helped Ashy bury him in the graveyard near the currant bush.

There was Hill Difficulty, and the Enchanted Grounds and various other spots named from our favorite book of reference, an old illustrated copy of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

As I neared the house I found things so unchanged, I could scarcely realize that a year had passed away, since I stood at the gate, looking over the green meadows that lay embowered as in a nest of leaves, and took a tearful farewell of the beloved spot. I unlocked the door; the key grated harshly in the lock; as I stepped into the narrow passage, and saw the well-remembered furnishings, a hundred memories crowded upon me. I glanced into the low parlor, almost expecting my father's voice bidding me welcome, while such a feeling of loneliness and awe came over me I could not endure the stillness, but stepped quickly out into the fresh, sunny air; I opened the shutter, and then setting wide the door I crossed the parlor threshold, which was now flooded with the summer sunlight. I went through all the rooms; the library was still remaining as we had left it after father's death; the books lying on the tables and shelves as he had last left them, with the unfinished manuscript where he had been writing a few days before he died, lying with the

pen rusting beside it. My mother never wished the room arranged differently, and while she lived always cleaned and attended to it herself. The family Bible, which was older than myself, was on the table; I opened it and through the blinding tears I read those words which had so often brought comfort to my mother's bereaved heart, Christ's parting words to his disciples.

I soon found the silence too oppressive, the recollections too painful, and gladly withdrew to what was our well-kept garden; the shrubbery was still flourishing luxuriantly, although there was an air of dreariness about it. A few roses were blooming, and some hardy perennials that had maintained a desolate existence, amid the weeds and grass, were shedding their sweetness about me. Ashy soon after joined me, when we sat down on the shady doorstep and chatted for a long time. From his manner of speaking I concluded the first ardor of his attachment for the pretty schoolmistress had worn off and would fade entirely away, long before he would be in a position to marry.

After we had been talking busily for some time, he said abruptly :

"I shall not take any more of your money, Dora; I have despised myself all the time for doing so, and I am working at anything I can find to do, in order to get means to repay you. I can make my own way in the world without being helped by anyone weaker than myself."

"I should like still to help you, Ashy, working for others seems to be nearly all that I have to live for now."

"I am beginning to think there is little else worth living for," Ashy answered, rather gloomily.

"Oh, no, Ashy! not when we have dear friends and relatives to love and to return our affection; but there are stray beings like myself sent into the world to live for others far more desolate still than they. It is well if we learn to be satisfied with our mission," I said, a little bitterly. I was beginning to find, the last few hours especially, how difficult it was for me to learn that lesson.



CHAPTER XIX.

A SURPRISE.

I remained away so long that Mr. Wilton came to seek me. I had been indulging in such melancholy thoughts my cheeks had caught their hue, and when he saw me, he said, with something of the teacher's command in his voice, which I used occasionally to detect, "You must stay with us the remainder of the day, and we cannot allow you to come up here alone again."

I willingly submitted to his command.

Mrs. Green had the table laid, and dinner was waiting when we reached the parsonage. I had never dined here since my mother's death.

"It seems as though mother should be here," I said half-unconsciously. I had been thinking so much about her that morning it seemed she was about me.

"You must not stay there alone so long again, you will get to be a spirit yourself," Miss Wilton said.

"I shall not wish to go away from here again," I replied, and I felt the truth of what I was saying. Every moment seemed precious.

We dined in our morning-dresses, the day was so warm, and Mr. Wilton had come to conform to the country fashion of noonday dinner hour.

We went up-stairs directly after dinner, to dress, Miss Wilton to take a short siesta first. My robing occupied but a very little while, and I was soon ready for a stroll through the beautiful grounds, every year growing more beautiful, or for a chat with any one whom I might chance to meet.

As I passed the drawing-room door, Mr. Wilton called me. The blinds were drawn, and a very acceptable coolness pervaded the room.

"You do not think of going out in this burning sun?" he asked, as he saw me with a garden hat in my hand.

"I came down-stairs ready for any enjoyment that I might meet," I replied smilingly.

"Won't you come then and have an old-fashioned chat?"

He made room for me on the couch where he had been resting; while I willingly responded to his request, and hung my hat on the peg again, and took the proffered seat.

He asked, glancing quietly at me: "Does it seem like old times to be sitting here beside me, Dora?"

"It seems far better. I believe I have learned since I went away how pleasant those times were."

My heart throbbed with pain when I recollected how quickly this delightful visit would be a blessed dream of the past.

"I am glad that you like to be with us, that you have not forgotten your brother."

"I told you once I could never do that."

There was an undertone of pain in my voice. "Would that I loved him only as a brother!" yet as I reflected in the few moments, silence that ensued, I asked myself if I wished it otherwise. I could not but feel ennobled to have loved such a man; I consoled myself with thinking that it was impossible to love what was good and noble without coming to be like it.

Mr. Wilton broke the silence at last, by asking:

"Have you found the woman's heart yet, Dora?"

I wondered at the suppressed eagerness in his voice. The room was light enough for him to see the crimson flame that spread over my face. I did not answer his question.

"You *have* the woman's heart, I see that now, Dora. Must I always remain your brother?"

His eyes were reading my face, but I could not answer his question, although there was a strange joy faintly implied.

"I have been waiting for years for my little

girl to find her woman's heart. Can that heart now belong to another?"

He was standing now beside me. After a moment's silence, he continued:

"I shall never love any one, have never loved any one, as I do you; my gladdest anticipation for years, has been the hope of claiming you for life. Perhaps I may lose you altogether by this confession. I have hitherto restrained myself from speaking to you, only by a determined effort of my will. I can only lose you, and I must know my fate."

With a sob of joy I looked up for a moment in his flushed, eloquent face; he read my heart in that short look.

"Is it true?" he said, with his arms about me.

I bowed my head. Someway I could not find my voice to speak even one short monosyllable just then.

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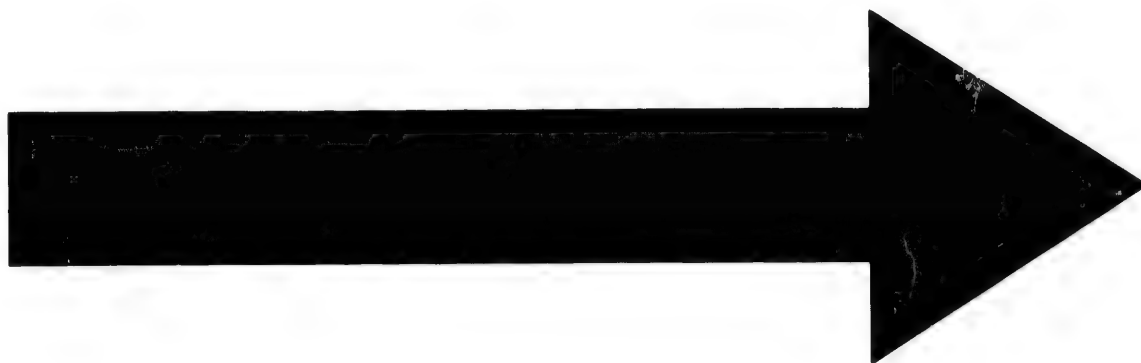
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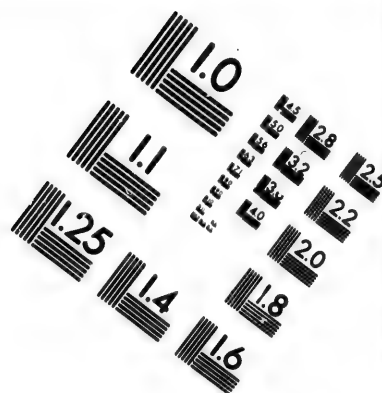
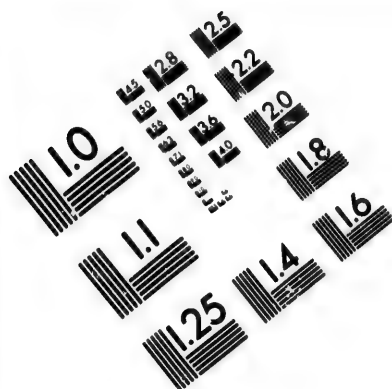


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whispered. "Yes, and I have been hungering ever since for another of those rare kisses."

We were still sitting in a most exalted frame of mind, when I heard his sister's footstep on the stair.

"Will she be willing to receive me as her sister?" I had time to ask hurriedly.

His answer reassured my frightened heart, and still more the fervor of her greeting, when he explained the state of our affairs fully to her, satisfied my most exacting desires. After we had chatted a little while, she said :

"I have some calls to make this afternoon, so I won't intrude any longer on your first happy hours."

"May I go with you? I shall not begin my happiness by being selfish. I know you would like your brother to accompany you also."

"That is true, but I will not be so exacting as to expect either of you to-day; I presume you have still much to say."

She was correct, as we had only just begun to

come down to things sublunary when she came in.

"There will be time enough for that again," I replied, as I started for my hat and parasol.

"You have not got permission to leave yet, remember, you are free no longer."

She looked mischievously at her brother. I looked too, and imagined he would have preferred the afternoon spent with me in the shaded drawing-room.

I soon returned equipped for the walk. We called first at Mrs. Mounts, I found her as cordial as ever. In the course of conversation, she was kind enough to say :

"We have heard such good accounts of you as a teacher that we have thought it would be an excellent plan for you to establish a select school here. Don't you think it would be a good plan?" she asked, appealing to Mr. Wilton.

I blushed painfully, although I was eager to hear what he might think of the proposal.

"Really, I could not advise." I saw a merry

twinkle in his eye, as he answered her question.

"My wife likes to encourage home manufacture," the squire said. "I expect she will have our Tom settle here, when he gets his profession, even if he should be in danger of starving to death. By the way, Mr. Wilton, do you know the magistrates blame you for the scarcity of litigation?"

After this the conversation became general, and I was no longer fearful lest Jennie should discover our secret. She was scarcely more gracious than formerly, responding very coldly to any advances of friendliness I attempted.

That evening, when alone, before retiring, I said to Miss Wilton:

"I wonder why she dislikes me so?"

"Why, my dear, she is jealous of you. I fancied I saw it long ago. She has sharp eyes."

"Well, we are even then, for I have been troubled because of her."

I had found such hearty welcomes in all the homes, whether rich or poor, where I had called that afternoon, that I said to Miss Wilton:

"I wish I could lengthen out my holidays six months."

"Why do you not say sixty years? I hope they will last that long."

"What do you mean?" I asked wonderingly.

"Why, we shall never let you go back to that hard life. I assure you, my brother has no intention of losing you again."

"Ah! but I have given my promise, I cannot break that," I replied with a feeling of gladness, to think I had so promised. I was next to penniless and in debt; I could not think of coming even to my husband, under such circumstances.

"You will soon find, sister mine, those objections overruled," was the decided rejoinder.

I held my peace, but my mind was nevertheless firmly made up on that one point, at least.



CHAPTER XX.

MARRYING.



HAT same evening, at the tea table, Mr. Wilton asked me to take a short drive, of course, I readily acquiesced. In the early twilight we started for a leisurely trot across the long bridge, and into the next township for a little way. As we drove along he said :

"I thought there might be sad associations for you if we drove along the accustomed lanes and streets of our village. I want our drive to-night to be all glad."

"I would not but be happy anywhere with you," I whispered softly.

"Then you must never leave me again," was the decided answer.

"I have promised Mr. Kye to return. I must not forfeit my word."

"I can easily make that all right. I know several ladies who will gladly take your situation."

"I have received my first quarter's salary; I cannot be in debt any longer." I felt my cheeks crimson, I was ashamed of my indebtedness every time I caught a glimpse of the now nearly empty purse.

"My dear child, a quarter's salary is a mere nothing, I will gladly settle that; I would consider it scarcely worth a thought given to a mere acquaintance, what will it be then, when given for you?"

"It is a great deal to me, and I must pay it myself."

"You will at least accept a loan from me, Dora? You may have a dozen years credit."

"I should only be getting more hopelessly involved all those years, I fear."

"All that I possess would not equal in my estimation this, that you have promised me this afternoon," and he folded my hand in his. Seeing that I was determined, he said at last: "Will you let me come for you at the end of the quarter? I cannot wait longer than that for my wife."

My holidays passed only too quickly. I spent a good many leisure moments with Mrs. Dutton, her rapidly developing children taxed her needle severely, while her mechanical abilities were none of the best.

I met the object of Ashy's affection and found her quite pretty, but not the person I would have chosen for my boy. He saw that I was disappointed but it did not trouble him. A boy's first love generally wears off in a little while, and Ashy was not an exception to the general rule. I was only glad the glamour had passed from his eyes, and heart, before it was too late, as is so often the case.

When I went back to my school duties I found them someway to be unusually light. I

found leisure every week to visit my sick hospital friends.

Before we had been an hour together, Dr. Dowse said :

"Allow me to congratulate you, my dear friend on your happiness. I see it in your face and I am glad for you."

But I could not detect any gladness either in his face or voice.

He invariably drove me home and was as kind as ever, but he never spoke of my approaching marriage with Mr. Wilton.

My one great perplexity during those weeks was, where I should obtain the really necessary articles to make me presentable as a bride. One day I was pondering as usual, only becoming the more anxious as the days went by, when it occurred to me that I might sell to some advantage a few of the many sheets of music I had been diligently composing for several months, and which had already received Professor Auhlman's favorable commendation.

I selected a few of the best, and at the earliest

opportunity started for the publisher. When I was shown into his office and had delivered my manuscript, I trembled a little.

I was promised an answer in a few days. Probably he saw I was anxious, and his heart may have warmed kindly towards me. At the appointed time I appeared for a reply, and was overjoyed to learn that my compositions had been accepted, and sufficient compensation awarded to procure a few of the necessary articles.

I was obliged to make Mrs. Kye my confidante, I needed her assistance so greatly. Her manner led me to suspect that it was not news to her.

"Did Mr. Wilton tell you?" I asked.

"He did not tell me."

"Did he tell the doctor, then?"

"Why do you ask?" she answered evasively.

"Because I see it in your face that you know it."

"You cannot blame Mr. Wilton for telling his own secret?" she asked, smilingly.

At the end of the term, by diligent perseverance and the sale of a few more sheets of music,

I found myself out of debt, and ready for my brother, that once was, when he might come to claim me.

He did come at the appointed time, and in the beautiful church, where his mother and sisters worshiped, and where he, too, in his boyhood had learned the way to Heaven, he received me as his bride.

In our peaceful home, in the quiet village, I find my days gliding evenly by. Among the friends of my girlhood, none are more highly honored than Dr. Dowse.

Our little Meta seems the light of his eyes. Some day we expect to call him brother, when our dear sister will make his home as happy as our own has been.

Ashy has matured into a useful and earnest man. Mrs. Dutton is still busy with her family cares, but there are no longer little children clinging to her knees. Alexandrina is soon to be married, an event which, in her good mother's eyes, is of vast importance.

I find my life grows brighter as the years ad-

vance, and I am convinced it will continue to do so until my life on earth is merged in the unending existence of Heaven, if I continue to live as I believe God has taught me. I do not find a state on earth free from care, and a measure of imperfection, but I have found that our lives can be made very grand and lovely.

I have proved the wisdom of my father's dying admonition. My purest happiness has come from following that advice, by living not for myself, but to make those happier and better who are about me, or at least to earnestly endeavor so to do.

